

FEATURE PRESENTATION VIRTUAL COMBAT NEWSLINE VIRTUA FIGHTER KIDS, MEGATUDO
2096, RANMA 1/2, NIGHTS COMIX SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: CAMMY, SAMURAI SHODOWN

GAME ON! USA

THE MAGAZINE OF ELECTRONIC MANGA GAMING

NEWSLINE
STAR GLADIATOR
NIGHTS
RANMA 1/2 BATTLE RENAISSANCE

COMIX
SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: CAMMY
SAMURAI SHODOWN

FEATURE PRESENTATION

VIRTUAL COMBAT

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VOL. 1, NO. 2
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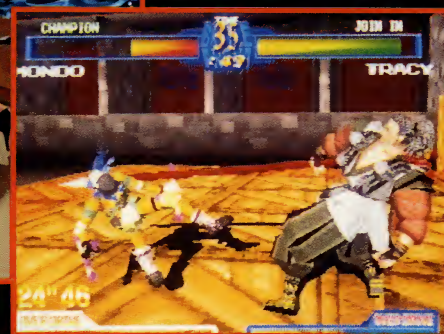
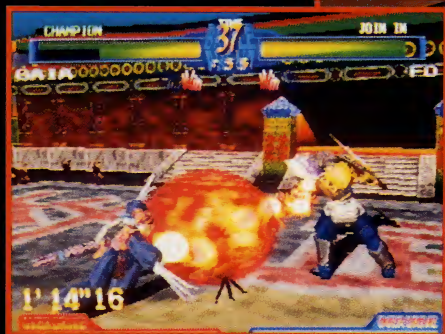
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FEATURE PRESENTATION

4



4 VIRTUAL COMBAT

Virtua Fighter 3 versus Tekken 2...Namco and Sega square off in a new arena, the PlayStation and Saturn. Will Namco's rising popularity match the tidal wave of Virtua fandom? From the first polygons to the next level

7 OUT OF THE ARCADES

How well do polygon characters translate to artists' pens? Well indeed, according to the comics, animation and even audio CD adventures based on Tekken, Toshinden, and Virtua Fighter!

8 NEW TO THE ARENA: AMERICA MEETS TOSHINDEN 2

Battle Arena Toshinden is one of the hottest console fighting games, and the only one to go from home to arcade. Why has such a manga-based game taken off in the U.S. market? Dave Hoffmann of Playmates Interactive answers the question of Toshinden's genesis



8

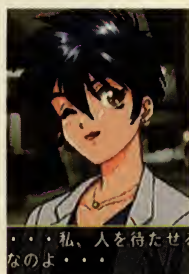
14 SPECIAL REPORT

MAKING CONVERTS

Talk all you want about Japanese games, it's a long process bringing them to America. And even in the best conversions, what's left behind?

THE MANGA COMBO

14



16 INTRODUCTIONS

17 SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: CAMMY

Cammy heads to a Mediterranean island to investigate the deadly tournament Battlerave. But what mission has brought World Warrior Guile to the island, and why does Cammy feel she's been there before? The FIRST EVER APPEARANCE IN ENGLISH of the manga by MASAHIKO NAKAHIRA!

49 SAMURAI SHODOWN

Haohmaru and Nakoruru receive a scroll and a mission from a dying stranger, while the ninja Nagiri seeks the blood of Japan's strongest and most-in-need-of-a-haircut samurai! The FIRST EVER APPEARANCE IN ENGLISH of the manga by KYOICHI NANATSUKI and YUKI MIYOSHI!

73



DEPARTMENT

2 FROM THE EDITOR

By Jason Thompson

10 NEWSLINE

VIRTUA FIGHTER KIDS•RANMA 1/2 BATTLE RENAISSANCE•NIGHTS•MEGATUDO 2096...If it's on the way from Japan to the States, it has to travel along the Newsline.

13 JAPAN'S TOP TEN VIDEO GAMES

All systems. All players

74 PLAY TESTS

Reviewed this month: TALES OF PHANTASIA, X-MEN: CHILDREN OF THE ATOM, HORNED OWL, RESIDENT EVIL

76 GAME OVER!

Social workers generally shy away from video games, but in the case of beautiful, brainwashed, amnesiac fighting women, our three male experts were more than willing to help. Virtua Fighter's Sarah, Tekken's Nina and Toshinden's Sofia join in Virtual Combat of their own

80 UPCOMING

Next issue: We speak with SNK

10



Future Game Designers, Unite!



Are video games art, and is gaming creative? Editing the feature for this month's *Game On!*, I was tempted to compare polygon fighting games' efforts at realism to the geometric sketches of Renaissance painters. (Pretentious? All right, I surrender...) But I had doubts. Today, comics and animation are finally being recognized as art forms, but video games are still pariahs, like quarter-guzzling partyers at a gallery opening.

So why, officially, *aren't* they "art?" There are exceptions—the few "arcade museums" come to mind—but there are also obstacles. Many games aren't independent from their hardware; recommending a Saturn game above a PlayStation one, or vice versa, can get you blamed for taking sides. Like movies, too, video games are a commercial team effort; for every Shigeru Miyamoto or Yu Suzuki there are hundreds of programmers, designers, and playtesters, and who should get credit? Finally but crucially, for some people video games break the "rule" that art should be seen, not involved in. Critics don't expect to find *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the format of a *Choose Your Own Adventure* book. But all good stories involve the audience. I've seen movies with less excitement than *Bionic Commando* and read books with less thought than *Actraiser*.

I'm not arguing that the 1800s' *The Three Musketeers* is the 1990s' *Soul Edge* (yet). But even if the Academy doesn't know it, video games are already art to the people who will one day design them. When I was 12 my brother and I were designing video games—fighting side-scrollers based on our junior high, not-to-be sequels like *1945* and *Pillow Fight*, 25-level extravaganzas no ROM cartridge of 1986 could have held. My brother practiced drawing by observing, not Michaelangelo's models, but the sprites in *Metroid* and *Space Harrier*. We weren't exceptional couch potatoes, either; many people we knew planned games, fighters bloodier than

Mortal Kombat and quests longer than *Final Fantasy III*. For real players, there's no question that games are art (and fun).

The big shots never hired us, and we put our creativity to other uses. My constant need for twisted humor (such as the Michael Jackson boss in our horror game) probably wouldn't have survived the lawyers anyway. But now, ten years later, the standard video-game-as-corporate-flagship ("Move aside! It's another *Street Fighter!*") is being challenged by the increasing recognition of individual craftspeople, and by the spread of new media like the anarchistic Internet. In Japan creators are more recognized, and there is easy movement between manga and gaming. Creators are also less restrained in the PC market, where an idea like *Doom* can grow. We can only hope that the freewheeling spirit of individual designers, who grew up playing games, will find a place in the 32-bit market, in the same way that independent comics are ever-increasing in popularity.

Looking back at the sheets of graph paper we covered with bosses and level maps, I dream that the next super hit will come out of a fan's sketches and not a boardroom meeting. Video games may not have been art to our *Pong*-playing parents, but they will be to the next generation, and *Game On! USA* will hopefully be guests at the gallery.

Jason Thompson
Editor

Send your letters and fan art to *Game On! USA!*
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Virtual Combat

Sega and Namco are neck-and-tech in the
race to make the next thing in polygon fighters





Virtua Fighter 3

Of the two new characters in *VF3*, only Aoi Umenokoji was revealed at the 1996 AOU show, though the second is also supposed to be a female fighter. Each fighting arena is individual in *VF3*; Lau can flip off walls to throw opponents such as Pai, and Jeffrey's island level may have no ring outs, and instead have the characters slowed by walking in the water. The updated liquid Dural is now truly intimidating, and Jacky seems to have grown some years younger. Sega's AM2 team visited E3 and we'll have more info about *VF3* in a future issue.

3D games have sold the 32-bit systems, and fighting games have the greatest arcade-to-home appeal. The battle between the Sega Saturn and the Sony PlayStation is partly the battle between Sega and Namco, and in Japan as in America the fandom is intense. 3D rendering for its own sake has impressed people since the '80s, but realistic movement soon became the goal of programmers, and the acid test of realism is always the human body. Game designers know Virtual Reality is much more real when it has *people*. And if the people can fight one another in the process, all the better.

THE INITIAL ATTACK: SEGA

Fighting games were big. Polygon games were big. But no one had put the two together before Sega debuted *Virtua Fighter* in 1993.

Sega had been a 3D revolutionary already with *Virtua Racing*, the first game to use the Model 1 board later used in *VF*. By modern standards of polygon count, *Virtua Fighter* is primitive, but more than the graphics, it was the movement that won diehard fans. At the then-awesome 30 fps, with true 3D, it was spellbinding just to watch the characters move. Sega's success with *Virtua Fighter* was all the more impressive considering they avoided many of the features of other fighting games, such as story-telling endings and a large number of characters.

But, of course, its pared-down fighting was the selling point for *Virtua Fighter*, when testing new technology, stick to the gameplay basics. Players respected the realism, the lack of fireballs. Hours of research into everything from Greek wrestling to jujitsu, using actual martial artists, paid off. Accordingly, to research *Virtua Fighter 2*, Sega's AM2 development team traveled to China to watch—and, reportedly, spar with—actual masters of kung fu. With even crisper graphics and gameplay, and new characters, *Virtua Fighter 2* (and *2.01* and *2.50*) solidified Sega's hit.

THE CULT OF PERSONALITY

Serious gamers recognize the people behind games. Yu Suzuki, the sports car-driving head of Sega's AM2 team, is a celebrity in Japan, and by the end of 1995 became known in America, thanks to many interviews. Japanese gaming magazines have "AM2 Watch" sections just to keep an eye on Suzuki and his staff. But the characters in *Virtua Fighter* are even more popular. The Internet hosts dozens of web sites and FAQs for specific characters. Beyond that, the merchandise begins; Sarah Bryant pin-ups, Saturn CD-ROMs of character art, best-selling music CDs, coffee table books, character-specific strategy videos.

A look at the top ten
Japanese arcade games
for one month shows five
Sega and five Namco
titles. If you don't think
that's rivalry...

Sega also made the wise choice of making the *Virtua Fighter* series react to player input, in the form of fan events; the winner of the First World Fighting Tournament in the game (Lau) was determined by the real-life winner of a nationwide competition held at Game Spot 21 in Tokyo, Japan. American and Canadian fans have their own tournaments, whether formal ones or just trips up to Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal to meet and beat fellow players. Playing styles have been seriously analyzed; Japanese *tetsujin*-style ("iron man" or "champion") players actively challenge their opponents, while American players tend to use the *machi* style (from the verb "to wait"), waiting for the opponent to strike first and then mauling them with combos when they're open.

THE SECOND ROUND: NAMCO

In their own press, the arcade company Namco admits they were "previously best-known for *Pac-Man*," but that changed with *Tekken*. Like Sega, Namco became known for 3D racing simulations before it pulled out its ace. Unlike *Virtua Fighter*, however, *Tekken* wasn't an overnight success.

Tekken (original title "Rave War") appeared in the arcades in 1994, where it was immediately compared to the almost simultaneously-released *Virtua Fighter 2*. It had a darker plot than the *Virtua Fighter* games, and its characters were also weirder. Some gamers found them too ugly, or lacking in a strong central hero (Kazuya, the protagonist, is undeniably evil...). *Tekken*'s "a button for each limb" control system was also unlike anything seen before, and attracted "love it or hate it" responses. Still, its controls and its total of 18 characters were unprecedented.

The PlayStation lifted *Tekken* to a best-seller, paving the way to make the 1995 *Tekken 2* an arcade hit. Signing up with Sony for home system exclusivity, and sharing technology to build the System 11 hardware, Namco began to build on its *Tekken* series. Adding kangaroos, raptors, and the devil to the character lineup was a break with those who wanted Namco to follow in Sega's realism-oriented footsteps. Touches like Jack's winning move, where he pounds on his chest until he loses balance and falls over, show an overall sense of humor. The arcade *Tekken 2* also emphasized the number of characters (now 24) with a character time-release system, releasing one new character per week after the game's first appearance and luring arcade gamers back (although shutting the machines off at night kept resetting the clock to Day One, a bug which Namco rushed to fix). *Tekken 2 ver.B* added a new character—the angel—and kept fans in anticipation. Now there are "Namco Watch" sections in Japanese gaming magazines, and 108-player New Year's Eve *Tekken* matches to determine champions.

continued on page 6

Virtua Fighter



Virtua Fighter 2



Virtua Fighter 3



Virtua Fighter 3





Tekken



Tekken 2



SNK

Who has done more 2D fighters than SNK? *Shin Ou Ken* uses rendered graphics in a flat 2D field, and the shooter *Metal Slug* uses rendered backgrounds. But are they truly 3D?

continued from page 5

HOMES AWAY FROM HOME

Although Sega's arcade-to-home transfers were normally easier than Namco's, the Sega Saturn wasn't conceived as a 3D polygon system...until *Virtua Fighter* forced it to be. In five programming months, the AM2 team rushed *Virtua Fighter* onto the unfamiliar Saturn hardware, where it became the American pack-in game. There wasn't enough time to clean up graphical glitches, though, leading to the creation of the texture-mapped *Virtua Remix*. Finally, *Virtua Fighter 2* appeared in time for Christmas '95.

The PlayStation was designed for 3D, and though *Tekken* didn't make the launch software, November release was more than enough to make the '95 holiday season. Aggressive advertising and beating *VF2* to the shelves was key for sales which made it a hit title. *Tekken 2* is awaited in the U.S. in September, and Namco's *Soul Edge* will likely be an easy System 11 conversion too.

GRASS BLADES AND SWORD BLADES: THE NEXT LEVEL?

A look at the top ten Japanese arcade games for one month shows five Sega and five Namco titles. If you don't think that's rivalry, you just keep waiting for Sega to make products for the Nintendo 64. Namco and Sega's control of the arcade market ensures they'll be side-by-side for some time to come (despite games like Takara's *Toshinden* crossing between PlayStation, Saturn, PC and arcade). *Virtua Fighter* has a huge Japanese lead, but Namco has the strength of the American PlayStation market.

With its new characters and graphics, *Virtua Fighter 3* is Sega's 1996 plan to become #1 at the arcades. "You can see grass blades under the characters' feet!" is one standard response from witnesses of *VF3* demonstrations. *Virtua Fighter 3* will be out in late 1996...trailed by *Tekken 3*, which Namco has kept even more secret than *Virtua Fighter 3*, if such a thing is possible.

The likely end to this conflict is when the home hardware becomes incapable of keeping up with the arcade...or, in Namco's case, when System 11's PlayStation origins become a drag on its arcade capabilities. But Sony will keep fighting for Namco, who,

like Sega, has produced other successful fighting games besides their main franchise (such as Namco's *Soul Edge*—polygons with weapons—and Sega's *Fighting Vipers*—polygons with armor). System 11 and Model 2 are too new to have exhausted their possibilities.

Soon gamers will know if the gameplay in *Virtua Fighter 3* matches the graphics—graphics which remind you that the ultimate goal of polygon games is not to look like polygons. Also, until joysticks and the human mind become capable of more precise 3D movement, some aspects of 3D games may stay the same as 2D ones. AM2's Yu Suzuki believes that a basically 2D (head-to-head, linear) fighting field is the best even in 3D games, to keep gamers' concentration. It remains to be seen if other games follow *Toshinden*'s step into broader 3D motion.

There'll be more dollars and development hours shed before the fighting is over. **95**



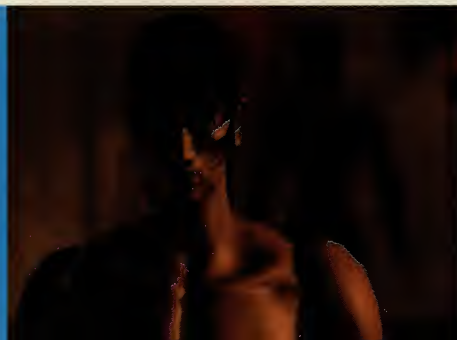
Capcom

Even Capcom has gotten into 3D games with *Star Gladiator*. As a Japanese Capcom source said, "In a 2D game, there's only so much you can do."



Tekken 2

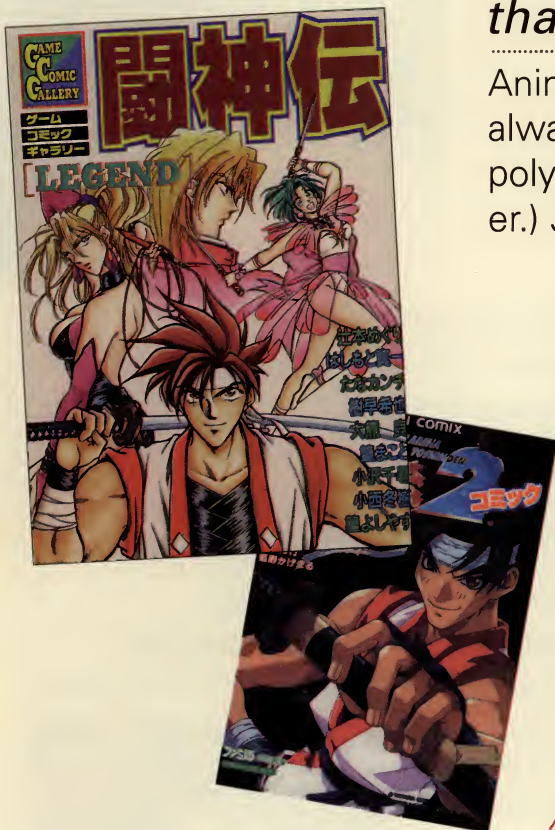
Tekken 3 screen shots weren't available when this issue went to press, but *Tekken 2* itself has undergone a lot of changes from the arcade to the PlayStation's *Tekken 2 ver.C*. Each character, even the bosses, now has an individual ending, and a wireframe mode where you see through your character's eyes adds a new experience, more like a conventional boxing game. Even the little explosions when you strike another character are now light-sourced to cast shadows.



OUT OF THE ARCADES

Is the pen mightier than the polygon?

Anime and manga versions of polygon fighting games always bring up the question: is it appropriate to portray polygon characters with traditional art? (It's certainly cheaper.) Judging from the amount of manga it certainly is.



TEKKEN

Coming Soon to a Video Store Near You?

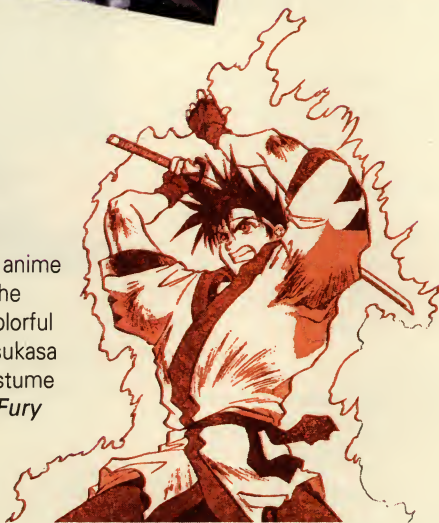
The original *Tekken* manga series having come to an end, as well as a *Tekken* anthology comic published by Game Comic Gallery, *Tekken 2* manga by Norifumi Takeda is a current ongoing series in *Gamest*. The mostly-serious storyline focuses on Michelle Chang and Jun; some battle sequences have brief explanatory diagrams on how the various moves work in the game. Rumors persist that *Tekken* anime is in progress, but Namco Japan has said there's no truth to it. How it would fit all 18 (or 24) characters into one storyline would be impressive in itself.

TOSHINDEN

Manga from the Start

Toshinden had a tie to anime and manga right from the beginning, with lush, colorful character designs by Tsukasa Kotobuki (Assistant Costume Designer for the *Fatal Fury* anime). Kotobuki also drew a 24-page introduction to the game in the gaming mag

Dengeki PlayStation, showing the various characters gathering at the tournament as Gaia watches and sneers. ("Next Month the Screen Explodes with Hot Fighting Action!") A monthly series by Takeshi Takibiyashi also runs in *Shonen Ace*, and ASCII Comix and Keibunsha's Game Comic Gallery have already released *Toshinden 2* manga anthologies by various authors with all the war angels, rivalry and swordplay of the game. The art quality varies wildly, as is typical for anthologies, so no "definitive" story yet depicts the entire series. *Toshinden's* setting is also hard to pinpoint; gun-toting modern thugs alternate with seemingly *Shogun*-era settings. Possibly the two-volume *Toshinden* animation will clarify everything.



VIRTUA FIGHTER

Virtually everywhere

You can't find much more of any video game than *Virtua Fighter*. In Japan there's a *Virtua Fighter* anime TV series, set before the first tournament (i.e., with younger characters) and starring Akira, Pai, Jacky and Sarah. The half-hour episodes are directed by Hideki Tonokatsu (*Vifam*, *Tekkaman Blade 2*) and have character designs by Ryo Tanaka (*Fist of the North Star*). The show includes 'educational' sections when they break off to explain the moves, how to use your opponent's weight against him, and how to beat up people in general. So popular is it that its run has recently been extended.

Virtua Fighter 2 manga, including several Sarah Bryant-specific stories, appears aimed in comics aimed at 3rd-6th graders, in *Weekly Playboy* and *Comic Tetsujin*. Jacky Bryant is actually the main character in *Legend of Sarah*, by Takahai Matsumutu, a story which shows the brother and sister before and after Sarah's brainwashing (as well as the criminals responsible, never seen in the game). Contrarily, Americans have only had a single one-shot 1995 *Virtua Fighter* comic by Marvel, which approached the subject matter tongue-and-cheekly enough to name the setting "Virtua City." (They did, however, depict Sarah Bryant in suitable gushing attractiveness.)



NEW TO THE ARENA: How *Battle Arena Toshinden 2* Came to the U.S.



Next to Sega and Namco's flagships, the most well-known 3D fighting game is probably *Battle Arena Toshinden*. *Toshinden*'s gameplay, with flashy special moves and fast (some say too fast) motion, was just what some people wanted after the relative economy of *Tekken* and *Virtua Fighter*. Some described it as "*Virtua Fighter* with *Street Fighter* moves."

How did *Toshinden* come out of a development team with no past hits to reach such success? For an answer, *Game On! USA* visited with Dave Hoffmann, producer of *Battle Arena Toshinden 2* for Playmates Interactive.

Game On! USA: *Toshinden* was published in Japan by Takara, and in the States by Sony Computer Entertainment. Did you have any trouble getting the rights?

Hoffmann: *Toshinden* was slated for us originally, but Sony had a prior arrangement with Takara.

Game On! USA: How'd that change for *Toshinden 2*?

Hoffmann: We have a really long and close relationship with Takara, primarily due to our toy business. For instance, they did the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles in Japan, we did them here. When Takara closed their American office, we basically offered to distribute their products, and they ours.

Game On! USA: Does Playmates have any other fighting games "under their belt", so to speak, or is this a new direction for the company?

Hoffmann: I personally have experience with fighting games. I used to be employed with Data East, at which time we were working on *Fighter's History*, the game which started the big Capcom vs. Data East lawsuit. Data East eventually won it, but it was a long, money-draining lawsuit. If they had lost, Capcom would have been able to go to every company that's produced a one-on-one fighting game and made them pay royalties. That showed the

industry that Capcom's not the only one who can make fighting games...thank God!

Game On! USA: Do you personally play many fighters?

Hoffmann: I really like *Street Fighter Alpha* on the Sony Playstation, and *Tekken 2* is a really good one in the arcades.

Game On! USA: So...2D or 3D?

Hoffmann: I would say 3D nowadays. I still play *SFA*, but I'm amazed at some of the graphics that Tamsoft was able to pull off with *Toshinden 2*.

Game On! USA: Have you spoken closely with Takara, in Japan, about the conversion? Did they do the reprogramming, or did you do it in-house?

Hoffmann: The development company is called Tamsoft, and they are based in Asakusa, Tokyo. I had to go there a couple of times to work closely with the programmers and art directors and oversee the conversion.

Game On! USA: And how much *did* you alter? Was it mostly just a translation process, or did you make any alterations to gameplay, graphics, etc.?

Hoffmann: I *tried* to make a lot of alterations...primarily cleaning up the text and adding the English dialogue. However, a



lot of gameplay issues I wanted to see Takara do, they just simply flat-out didn't have enough time for. For example, I would like to speed up the way the characters come out of their rolls. When they roll, it takes a second, and it leaves them vulnerable coming out of it. The gameplay's really tight as is, which we are fortunate for. But I've read some Japanese reviews which focus on some of the negative points.

Game On! USA: I'm curious about the *Toshinden 2* packaging. Do you try to maintain the original Japanese-style art, or will you use new American artists?

Hoffmann: We're absolutely trying to keep the Japanese art, and keep it as Japanese as possible. One of the things that I really admire about fighting games is that they really hold tight to their origins. When the

The Sony
Toshinden packaging
was pathetic.



characters do a special move, or they have a winning or losing animation, they're still speaking Japanese. And that is by choice. [Makes a faster conversion, too—Ed.] We feel it would keep the game as original as possible. As far as the packaging was concerned, the Sony *Toshinden* packaging was pathetic. The *Toshinden 2* packaging in Japan is pretty good. Whether it works here in the United States is still under discussion. We're probably going to touch it up and redo it, though.

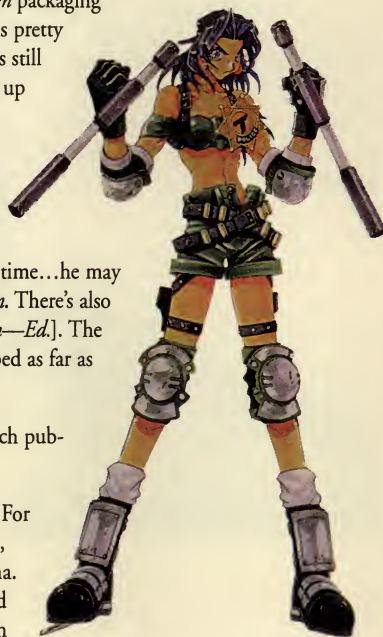
Game On! USA: Did the characters have to be changed at all for an American audience?

Hoffmann: We talked about adding Earthworm Jim as a playable character, but we just didn't have time...he may be a secret character in the PC version of *Toshinden*. There's also a really cool Gothic character at the end [Vermilion—Ed.]. The characters that were in *Toshinden* have all been upped as far as polycount.

Game On! USA: Japanese developers don't get much publicity over here. Tell us a little about Tamsoft.

Hoffmann: Hats off to them, they did a great job. For instance, in Duke's arena when the curtain goes up, the light actually streams down to the fighting arena. That kind of graphic quality and light sourcing and mathematical formulas can be done by pretty much any Sony developer; Tamsoft just has lots of experience, plus a big office with a large amount of staff. They've done other games, but they haven't been released in the states. We're currently looking at a car racing game and an isometric puzzle game that Tamsoft has done. They've also started working with Capcom in bringing *Toshinden* to the coin-op platform.

Game On! USA: Thank you, Mr. Hoffmann. 96



Toshinden on Tape



A good benchmark of a game's popularity in Japan is whether it becomes animated. *Battle Arena Toshinden* passed; it is being made into two volumes of OAVs (Original Animation Videos) by BMG Victor.

Masami Obari, director and character designer of the *Fatal Fury* animated movie, directs. Tsukasa Kotobuki, the game's original character designer, drafts and costume designs the anime characters.

The animation is a follow-up to the two volumes of audio-only CD dramas (think of radio plays), which are themselves sequels to the games, and even use the same voice talent! Some of the better-known voice actors include Akio Otsuka (the Japanese voice double of Arnold Schwarzenegger) as Rungo, Kanehito Shiozawa ("D" in *Vampire Hunter D*) as Duke, Yumi Toma (Deedlit the elf in *Record of Lodoss War*) as Sofia, and Kikuko Inoue (Belldandy in *Ah! My Goddess*) as Uranus.

The plot begins at the Toshin Taibu Championship, where Chaos breaks into a fight between Eiji and Gaia. After Rungo is badly beaten by Chaos, Eiji promises Rungo's son Christopher he will track down the sickle-wielding maniac...though he suspects his brother Sho may be behind everything. What is Sho up to? Is Sofia truly free from subliminal mindwiping by the organization she escaped? Who is behind the Toshinden tournament anyway?

The first volume appears on June 21st on video and laserdisc. Volume two will be released on August 21. Typical OAV length is 40-50 minutes.



No Sleep for the Sonic Team; Sega Plans *Nights*

Sega recently unveiled plans for a new polygon adventure game for the **Saturn**, *Nights* programmed by the Sonic Team (whose earlier RPGs include *Shining Wisdom*). *Nights* takes place in the "Night Dimension," where people go in their sleep; either to the green mountains and blue skies of benevolent Nighttopia, or to the dark and garish hallways of Nightmare. The Nightmares have begun invading Nighttopia, and it is up to the main characters, Elliot, Claris, and "Nights", to save it—being the only dream travelers to possess all the five *Idias*, color-coded emotional qualities of which red, courage, is the rarest. The action is polygonal 3D with 360-degree flying; a special analog joystick for the Saturn is being developed for better control.

Nights (scheduled for September release in the U.S.) looks like it could be the next action-adventure Mario or Sonic, if it shapes out well.



Legend of Oasis

This **Saturn** title, originally called *Thor* (Japanese name *Legend of the Elemental King*) appeared in Japan in April, and is slated for American release in August. (It's the sequel to *Beyond Oasis* for the Genesis.) As action RPGs go, it's not as

cartoony as most, although the combat system is reminiscent of *Zelda*. You play an Arabian-style character who fights not only with arrows and daggers but various elemental spirits, including water, fire, "green" (plantlife), shadow, and "brass" (sound and metal).

Gungriffon

"Gungriffon" is your AWGS—Armored Walking Gun System, also known as combat mecha—in this 3D shooting game, which takes place in the 21st century when four superpowers are at war on the Eurasian continent. The **Saturn** game *Gungriffon*, developed by GameArts, has been out in Japan since March, and should be in the States in June from Sega of America (who initially considered changing the title to *Iron Rain*). Your mecha have enough mobility to jump to take out enemy aircraft.

In Japan *Gungriffon* is the first game compatible with a MPEG card for the Saturn, which allows you to see 30 fps video segments.

However, as the card is unavailable in the states, U.S. gamers will have to watch 15 fps video.



Everything but the Speed Limits: Tokyo Highway Battle

It's rare that such Japan-specific titles appear in the States, but Jaleco has converted Bullet-Proof Software's **PlayStation** *Tokyo Highway Battle*. Not only are the racing circuits based on actual Tokyo highways (which will certainly be lost on most Americans), the main racers are real-life drivers captured on video (though their names may be changed in the U.S.). Your cars (up to 12, beginning with 3) can be customized between races in the polygon cityscape. Expect the American version in June if reprogramming goes as quickly as planned.





Beltlogger 9

Genki, developers of *Kileak: The Blood* (American title *Kileak the DNA Imperative*), will bring this 3D space shooting game to the **PlayStation** this Summer, forsaking the dark, mechanical corridors of their earlier game for the dark, asteroid-filled depths of space. "Beltlogger 9" is a rotating ore-mining colony, 2800 meters long and 300 meters in diameter, which you must defend from dangers in outer space. The gameplay is not totally violent, but also features puzzles that must be solved.

Makoto Kobayashi, known for his work in the *Gundam* series and the designer of *Giant Robo*, is the game's character and mecha designer.

JVC Considers New Keio Game

The bunny-eared manga moppet from the old Sega CD shooter *Keio Flying Squadron* is back in a **Saturn** platform game, *Keio Flying Squadron: The Fighting Chapter* from Victor



Entertainment. The side-scrolling action game features hammer-whacking, throwing, swimming, large boss characters and stomping on foes. Animation sequences are included. It was released on May 17

in Japan. JVC, who released the first game in the U.S., is considering the sequel.



Dark Savior

Climax developed this Japanese **Saturn** action RPG with a rarely-seen three-quarters viewpoint. You play bounty hunter Ryu-Ya, who's just delivered a new prisoner to an island prison when the criminal escapes, starting the plot.

As you travel the grim island clue-gathering and talking alternates with fighting-game sequences. When you meet an important enemy, you must beat them in two out of three rounds of combat, with power bars and on screen announcements. In addition, *Dark Savior* uses the "capture system," a *Mega Man*-like feature where you can defeat an enemy and gain her abilities. *Dark Savior* appeared in Japan in May.



Megatudo 2096

A **PlayStation** polygon fighter from Banpresto, scheduled for August release in Japan. The setting is the future, when robots produced by different companies have a combat grand prix. You can choose between several different types of humanoid, inhuman, and insectoid robots, each with firearms and melee weapons. The main character's machine is the mighty Dy Bringer; other machines include the spiky-looking Hell Bride and the spider-like Vanilla Giger (depicted here). Playtesters at **Game On! USA** wonder how it compares to similar games such as *Zero Divide*.



Checklist

More manga-styled titles to look for

IN AMERICA, Working Designs' military simulation *Iron Storm* and the side-scrolling Sega adventure *Guardian Heroes* appeared for the **Saturn** in April. In May, Working Designs' RPG *Shining Wisdom* also appeared for the Saturn. Capcom's *Darkstalkers* was delayed for **PlayStation**, to appear in stores in early June. **IN JAPAN**, *Lupin: The Master File*, a compilation CD of information and clips about master

thief and anime hero Lupin, appeared in late March; April saw the release of the *Bakuretsu Hunter (Sorcerer Hunters)* game, based on the ghostbusting, tight-leather anime; and in May, the *3x3 Eyes* game (adapted from the PC and PlayStation versions), based on Yuzo Takada's manga of devils and immortals, appeared. All the above are for Saturn.



Darkstalkers



Guardian Heroes

Cels and CD-ROMs

Upcoming Japanese game releases based on anime and manga.

Harukaze Squadron V-Force

Developer Ving has recently begun production of a **PlayStation** title which will not be released until this Fall. **V-Force** is a science-fiction simulation combat game with animation sequences providing story between the tactics. As three sisters, descendants of the last survivors of an advanced civilization from the planet Venus, you are **V-Force**! Your mission is to pilot advanced fighter planes against the invading Vaskeel empire. Although Japanese strategy games rarely hit the U.S., **Gall Force** fans may be interested in this story of women and spaceships.



Ranma 1/2 Battle Renaissance

When it comes to polygonization, this game proves: nothing is safe! **Ranma 1/2**, one of the most popular Japanese comics and star of three 16-bit fighting games, will leap to the Japanese **PlayStation** as a polygon fighting game in Summer of '96. This release from Shogakukan Productions uses motion-capture technology for realistic movement. Specialists in the Chinese martial arts were consulted to add an authentic touch to the moves. (One question: how do you add authenticity to a series where mallets materialize out of thin air and entire fights are conducted running along the top of a chain-link fence?)



The Great Dragon Ball Legend

How could any one system contain **Dragon Ball Z**? In May a **Saturn** version, substantially different from the older PlayStation fighting game, was released. The combat style is referred to as "fighting animation"; instead of one-on-one battle, you can control up to three characters at once, in a large

polygonal field of combat. And yes, there are animation sequences to fill all that CD space. The game follows the **Dragon Ball** story from Volume 18 of the manga to the last issue, with all the appropriate characters. One or two players, from Bandai.

Western Front

American comic and multimedia gaming



Cyberpunk enough for ya?: Steel Harbinger

Game On! USA recently got a look at an Alpha version of Mindscape's **PlayStation** game **Steel Harbinger**, scheduled for 3rd Quarter 1996. Set in the near future, after metallic alien pods have turned all life on earth into cybernetic monsters, the game stars you as a scantily-clad half-cyborg

woman who must save the human race by destroying her kin. The slaughter takes place from an angled pseudo-overhead view in which you can zoom in or out. Definitely right for fans of biomechanics and blood (though the game controls are somewhat imprecise at this stage, and it's hard to see your character from some angles.)

American Old-Timers Join Together: Williams Acquires Atari

On March 29 Williams Entertainment, publishers of arcade and home games from the **Defender** days to **Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3**, acquired Atari Games Corporation. One of the first American arcade companies, Williams now owns the very first, Atari Games, following Atari's last-gasp exit from the video game business in March. Williams' latest big arcade entry is this summer's polygon fighting game **War Gods**, incorporating **Mortal Kombat**-style fatalities and digitization into the 3D genre. **War Gods** will be released for the PlayStation and Nintendo 64 at the end of the year.



Arcadeline

Calling all quarters! Overseas titles that may hit home.

Star Gladiator

The Japanese AOU '96 arcade show debuted Capcom's entry into the polygon fighting game category (a move perhaps foretold by their distribution of **Toshinden 2**). **Star Gladiator** (planned for Summer release) features 8 strange characters in combat, able to go to the side or diagonally in a 3D field. The characters include a human swordsman, a dinosaur, a robot with eye lasers, aliens, and a flying bird-man. The viewpoint changes for drama when you use a special attack.



Virtua Fighter Kids

"I want the kids of the world to enjoy it," Yu Suzuki of AM2 was caught saying about this cute version of **VF2**. **VF Kids** (slated for Spring release in Japan, early Summer in America) is intended to look more friendly to a first-time player than the realism of the original. Whatever else it is, it's a triumph for fans of Super Deformed (also known as Small Bodied) character designs. It's also one of Sega's first games to use the Titan arcade system. Many gamers are curious how certain moves (such as hand-stands) will be possible with characters whose heads are bigger than their bodies.

Last Bronx

Rumble in the Last Bronx, anyone? Despite the title, this game is set in the Tokyo outskirts. Sega's AM3 team (**Sega Rally**, **Virtual On**) has always been eclipsed by **Virtua Fighter's** AM2, but they seem to be coming into their own with this weapon-based 3D polygon combat game. **Last Bronx's** characters (or the half-dozen visible at this time) look slightly grittier than those in **Fighting Vipers**, and the fight to the death uses weapons such as tonfas and nunchucks.



Sonic the Fighter

1996 seems to be Sega's blitzkrieg year for 3D fighting titles; Sonic, Knuckles, Tails and other animals (Bean, Espio, Fang...) duke it out in this unlikely entry. Sega promises to include some of the freedom of movement of the Genesis games with features like attacking while swinging on ropes. The name may change to **Kid Sonic** in the U.S. (it's scheduled for early Summer U.S. release). Like **VF2 Kids**, it will initially draw players based on character appeal, but gameplay will tell a lot.



Game On! Japan's Top Ten Games

This top ten list is based on sales, overall popularity, and industry expectations compiled by *Game On! Japan*, one of the leading cross platform game magazines in Japan. The following list appeared in its May 1996 issue.

#1—Bahamut Lagoon

Super Famicom/Square/RPG
Square may have decided to switch to PlayStation, but it's their latest Super Famicom (Super Nintendo) game that's #1 in Japan. **Bahamut Lagoon** features a variety of baroque monster designs and an internal "real-time" clock (for example, if you don't play the game in two weeks, your character doesn't feed the pets or water the plants...).

#2—Vampire Hunter

Sega Saturn/Capcom/Fighting
Fans have been waiting for this (known in the U.S. as **Darkstalkers 2: Nightwarriors**) for a long time. The manga-style visuals and smoothness are one key to its popularity; another is the short loading time.

#3—Namco Museum Volume 2

Sony PlayStation/Namco/Action
The second in a series which will have five volumes. Arcade gaming fans *do* have long memories if the success of this classic games collection is any indication.

#4—Let's make Japan's Pro Soccer League! (J-League Pro Soccer League O Tsukuro)

Sega Saturn/Sega/Sports Simulation
A very graphically impressive 32-bit title. As each country has its own teams, sports games (such as this official licensed product of Japan's J-League) are rarely converted.

#5—Live Powerful Pro Baseball 3

Super Famicom/Konami/Sports
At 7500 yen, the price is down for the third in this old classic series. The graphics are Super Deformed but the content and gameplay drive its success.

#6—Super Robot Wars 4 Scramble

Sony PlayStation/Banpresto/Simulation

#7—Super Famista 5

Super Famicom/Namco/Sports

#8—Super Donkey Kong 2: Dixie & Diddy

Super Famicom/Nintendo/Action-Adventure

#9—Tokimeki Memorial—Under the Legendary Tree (Tokimeki Memoriaru—Under the Legendary Tree)

Super Famicom/Konami/Simulation

#10—Gun Hazard

Super Famicom/Square/Action-Adventure

Making Converts

Following games from Japan to the U.S.

Three more weeks, three more weeks...time is an important factor in the gaming industry, as anyone who's waited for delayed software (or hardware) can testify. American software companies are no slackers, but ever since the NES, the majority of console video games have been converted for U.S. use after appearing months before in Japan. Translation is not always easy or fast, though, with differences in both hardware and culture; dedicated gamers often find a choice of waiting for conversions or buying costly direct-import games. The conversion process itself, sometimes improving, sometimes censoring, exposes many of the differences between Japanese and U.S. games.

Choosing the Games

America is a big game-buying market, but converting games is expensive, and large companies use discretion in deciding which of their games to release here. When game companies have offices in both the U.S. and Japan, the conversion process is easiest. Some companies, such as Square Soft, the makers of the *Final Fantasy* series, produce U.S. and Japanese versions practically parallel to one another.

Another source of conversions is freelance publishers who license Japanese games, usually for a flat fee, sometimes for a royalty. Some of the best-known Japanese game companies, such as Takara (*Battle Arena Toshinden*) and Enix (*Dragon Warrior*), no longer have game divisions in the U.S., and must go through third parties to find U.S. release. These companies

spend time looking for games to convert, based on potential popularity and licensing fees.

Most RPGs have at least 500-600 pages of text

When a single company produces original and conversion, the U.S. version often follows as soon as two months after the Japanese release. By the time games are more than a year old, they have little chance of being converted, but licensing fees have also dropped to a minimum, and small companies sometimes pick successful long shots as many as three years old.

Coming Soon?

Different countries mean different gaming audiences, and often a hit on one side of the Pacific is a flop on the other. Don't expect *Marriage*, a Saturn simulation game which lets you court beautiful members of the opposite sex (bigamy not allowed), to be advertised with a yell of "Sega!" soon. To many Japanese gamers, 16-bit RPGs are still more popular than anything; attendance in schools literally drops when popular games are released.

"There's no question RPGs in the U.S. are a niche market," says Matt Atwood,



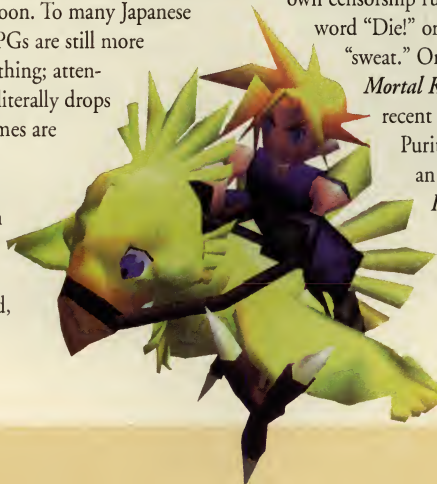
Public Relations manager and game translator for Working Designs (*Lunar*, *Iron Storm*). "A hot-selling RPG in the U.S. is in the thousands...in Japan, they're talking 'one-point-what million did you sell?'"

Fighting games are some of the only games produced with an American audience in mind; *Street Fighter II* was one such exception. Very easy to convert, they are more focused on graphics or gameplay than story.

There are some practices which are common in Japan but rare in America, such as re-releasing 16-bit games for 32-bit systems with the addition of animation sequences and minor touch-ups. (Viola! *Mega Man X3* for the Saturn and PSX.) Some games such as *Ultraman* and *Sailor Moon* simply have larger audience bases in Japan than America. Lastly, there are many that will obviously never be converted, as they draw on obscure characters or cultural references (*Hanjuku Hero*, a simulation/strategy game with themes from Kabuki and No theater, or *Waku-Waku 7*, a fighting game parodying anime characters).

The Cutting Room Floor

In games as in animation, Japan is more permissive than the U.S., and conversions are often toned down. Large companies have their own censorship rules, whether forbidding the word "Die!" or turning blood into white "sweat." Only the success of hits such as *Mortal Kombat* has changed this in recent years, to the extent that once-Puritanical Nintendo will release an Ultra 64 version of *Killer Instinct*. In America a "Mature" (17 years or older) rating lowers sales, so to fit a more kids-friendly rating



In Japan, Christianity is not treated with automatic reverence, and is sometimes used in jokes and puns

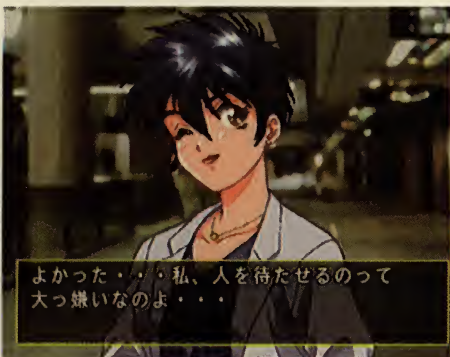
such things as nudity, shower scenes, and flipping off the camera are cut. Double standards remain; the Sega CD game *Snatcher*, a Cyberpunk story which received a "Mature" rating, retained its maggot-eaten corpses but had its alcohol and tobacco toned down.

One area of surprising touchiness is religious references. In Japan, Christianity is not treated with automatic reverence, and is sometimes used in jokes and puns. In many game conversions crosses are changed to Egyptian ankhs. Probably no game has as much notoriety as *Devil Summoner*, a Saturn occult RPG where the final boss is, depending on your character's behavior, either the Devil or God.

The Road to Code

After a game is selected, the U.S. company receives beta or developer's copies, as well as supplementary information on disk and paper. What happens then depends on the company's staff and size.

Smaller companies may polish up the games in-house, but send the actual programming and translation to contractors or companies in Japan. Everyone pitches in. Matt Atwood of Working Designs does continuity work, text editing, and even voice acting for games such as the *Lunar* series. At Atlus Software (*Virtual Hydlide*, *Devil Summoner*) Product Specialist Brian Glazebrook helps select games and does the editing. Larger companies, such as Square Soft, have specialized teams of 18-20 people, with separate programmers for graphics, battle scenes, and field work. The more people a company has, the more it can customize and retool the pro-



There's not much interactivity in the Saturn *Marriage*; just date each girl enough times and you're on the brink of proposal

gramming as well as the translation. Companies which do in-house programming use a full development system, or full workstations, for the hardware in question.

Translation is the most obvious part of conversion. After testing and evaluating the games, the converters come up with a dictionary of names for objects and characters in the game, and try to find appropriate translations (direct translations are often confusing). Changing kanji (Japanese and Chinese characters) to English is a time-consuming process, involving changes in the very memory map. English is a less compact language, and fills 150% of the space of kanji, so that text (particularly in RPGs) must often be dramatically abbreviated. Most RPGs have at least 500-600 pages of text!

"The audience tends to be well-educated readers," says Ted Woolsey, Marketing Director for Square Soft. Woolsey personally translated games such as *Secret of Mana* and *Final Fantasy*. "Japanese gamers) are more verbal in general than we are."


Gameplay is often changed as well. Japanese RPGs are often relatively easy, so in conversions the opponents are made more powerful and the rate of experience gain slowed. Continuity also has to be maintained; for all their drama, some Japanese RPGs have fairly disconnected plots.

Westward Ho!

After as many as several months of conversion, the game is ready. Some games are ubiquitous hits, not even recognized by younger players as Japanese. Some are players' first introductions to anime- and manga-style art.

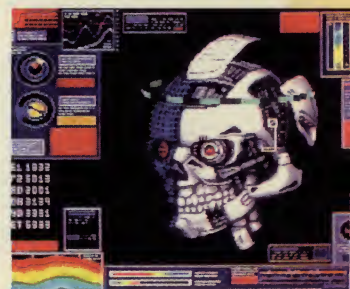
Others fail to break the cultural barrier, or the alteration for the U.S. audience backfires. The first *Ranma 1/2* fighting game for Super Famicom became the unrecognizable *Street Combat* for the S-NES, losing its distinctive characters and the whole point of the game. But ideally the conversion process provides additional time to perfect and debug the game, and make it appealing to a wider audience.

"Personally, I think the quality goes down," says Brian Glazebrook of Atlus Software. "The mood and feel of Japanese are lost."

"But," he adds, "I think if you're going to release a quality product anywhere, it'll be received well." 



Video comic *Snatcher* was originally released in Japan in 1988, and finally appeared for the American Sega CD in 1994. Fans so love the plot it's been revived in Japan for the PlayStation...moving from 8 bit to 32 bit with only minor changes



The first Ranma 1/2 fighting game for Super Famicom became the unrecognizable Street Combat for the S-NES

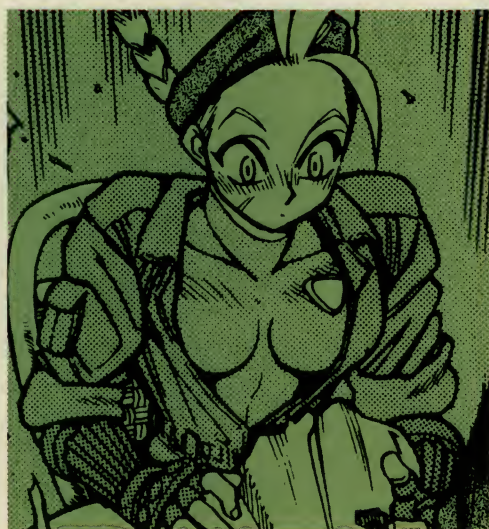


The joke-My Neighbor Totoro character (left) takes on another joke character in *Waku-Waku 7*, an arcade game

MANGA

F E A T U R E S

SUPER STREET FIGHTER II: CAMMY



The story so far...

Possibly the only 19-year-old who could match wits with James Bond and win, MI-6 (British Intelligence) agent Cammy is as well-honed in espionage as in athletics. Other agents sometimes look down on her for her age and gender, but Cammy has the respect of her commanding officer. More important to her is the great gap in her past, for Cammy is an amnesiac, trained by the Special Forces for three years but unable to remember anything of her early life.

Most recently she rescued top-secret blueprints for a high-tech weapon from a traitor in MI6: Byrd, a muscular powerhouse eager to sell out to the highest bidder. Fresh from that victory, Cammy is rushed off to a lawless island in the Mediterranean—Battleland—to investigate a new mystery on unfamiliar ground...



Name: Guile

Identity: American Green Beret

Notes: A participant in the Battle Rave tournament, he too has a secret reason for being on Battleland.



Name: Colonel Wolfman

Identity: Leader of the Special Operations Unit

Notes: Will Cammy live up to the expectations of her new superior officer?

SAMURAI SHODOWN



The story so far...

The year is 1787, the place is Japan. Arriving from the distant mountains of her home, the young warrior woman Nakoruru is unprepared for the greed and strife of the feudal world. Her travels take a strange turn when she meets, feeds, and challenges the cocky swordsman Haohmaru. Nakoruru's skill with knife and trained eagle surprise Haohmaru's defenses, and she becomes one of the only people able to draw his blood...or earn his respect.

Their fight is interrupted, however, by an apparition of a dark spirit whose evil has blighted the land. Haohmaru and Nakoruru break free, but are nearly ambushed by gun-bearing robbers. Only the throwing knives of a hooded stranger saves them.

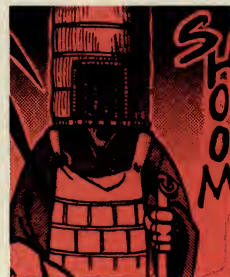
Now as they continue their journey, forces still more evil are mobilized by their enemies to stop them...



Name: Nagiri

Identity: Ninja Assassin

Notes: To avenge her father, she has sworn to kill Haohmaru!



Name: Unknown

Identity: Mysterious traveller

Notes: As much a fighter as a monk, he has already saved Haohmaru and Nakoruru's life.

SUPER STREET
FIGHTER II

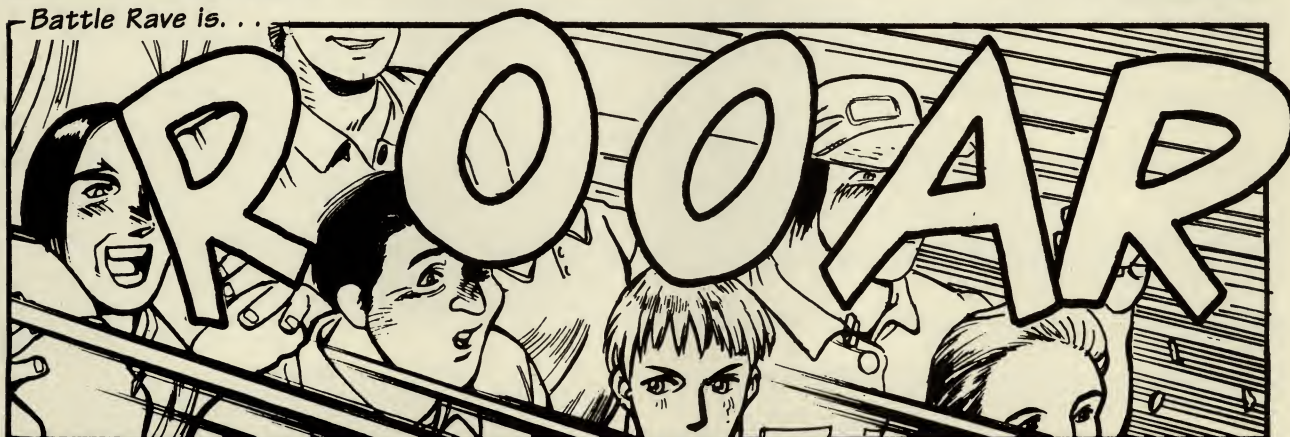
CAMMY

Battleland -- a small island in the Mediterranean

This place used
to be a little-known
resort area.

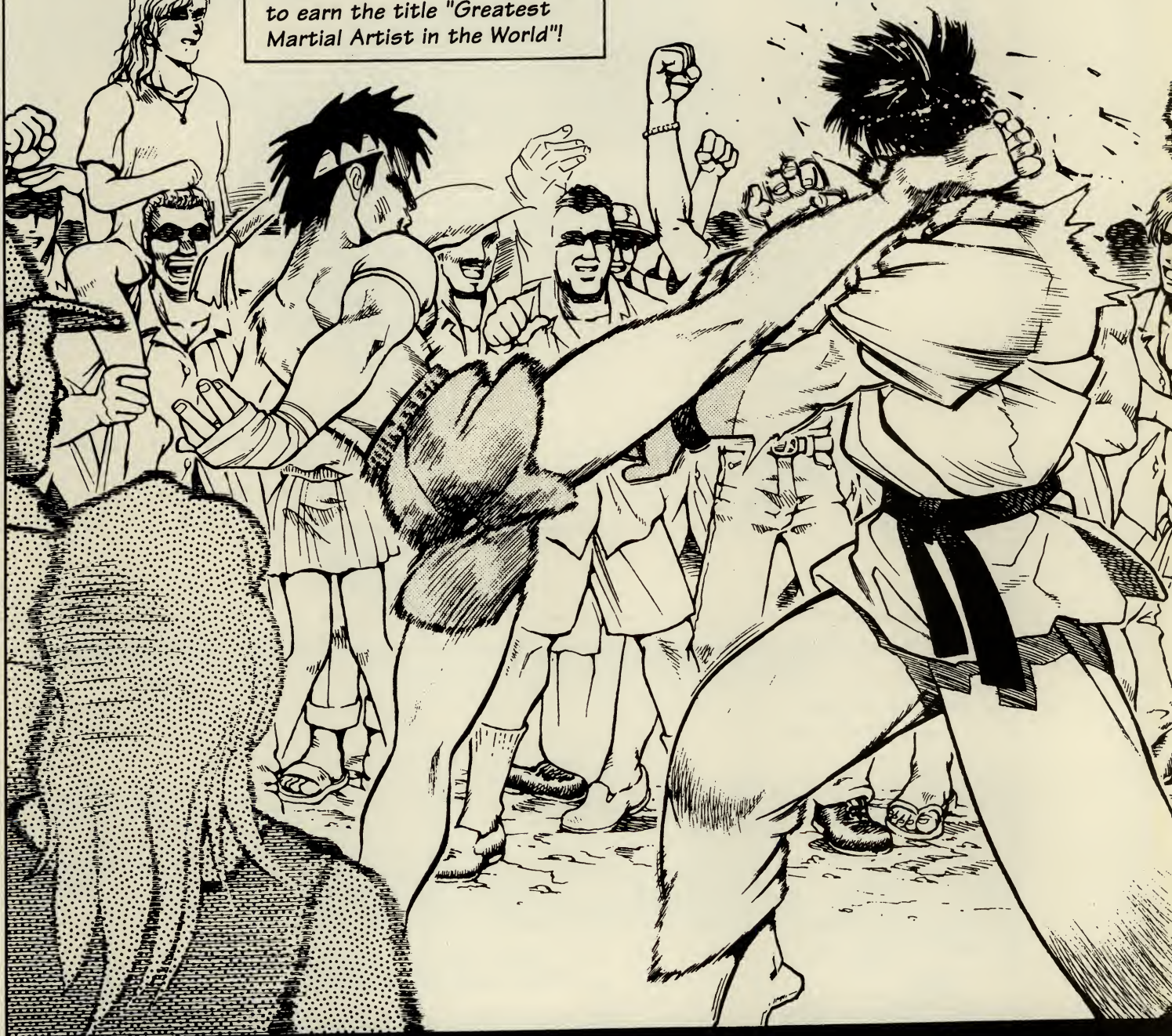
But its name traveled
around the world after the
annual Battle Rave started
three years ago.

Battle Rave is...



For the purposes of publication in English, the artwork in this publication is in reverse from the original Japanese version.

...a street fighting tournament
using the whole island as
an arena, in which people fight
to earn the title "Greatest
Martial Artist in the World"!



FIGHT TWO BATTLE RAVE PART ONE

Story & Art by **MASAHIKO NAKAHIRA**

English Adaptation by **JAMES D. HUDNALL & LILLIAN OLSEN**

Lettering & Touch-up by **MARY KELLEHER**

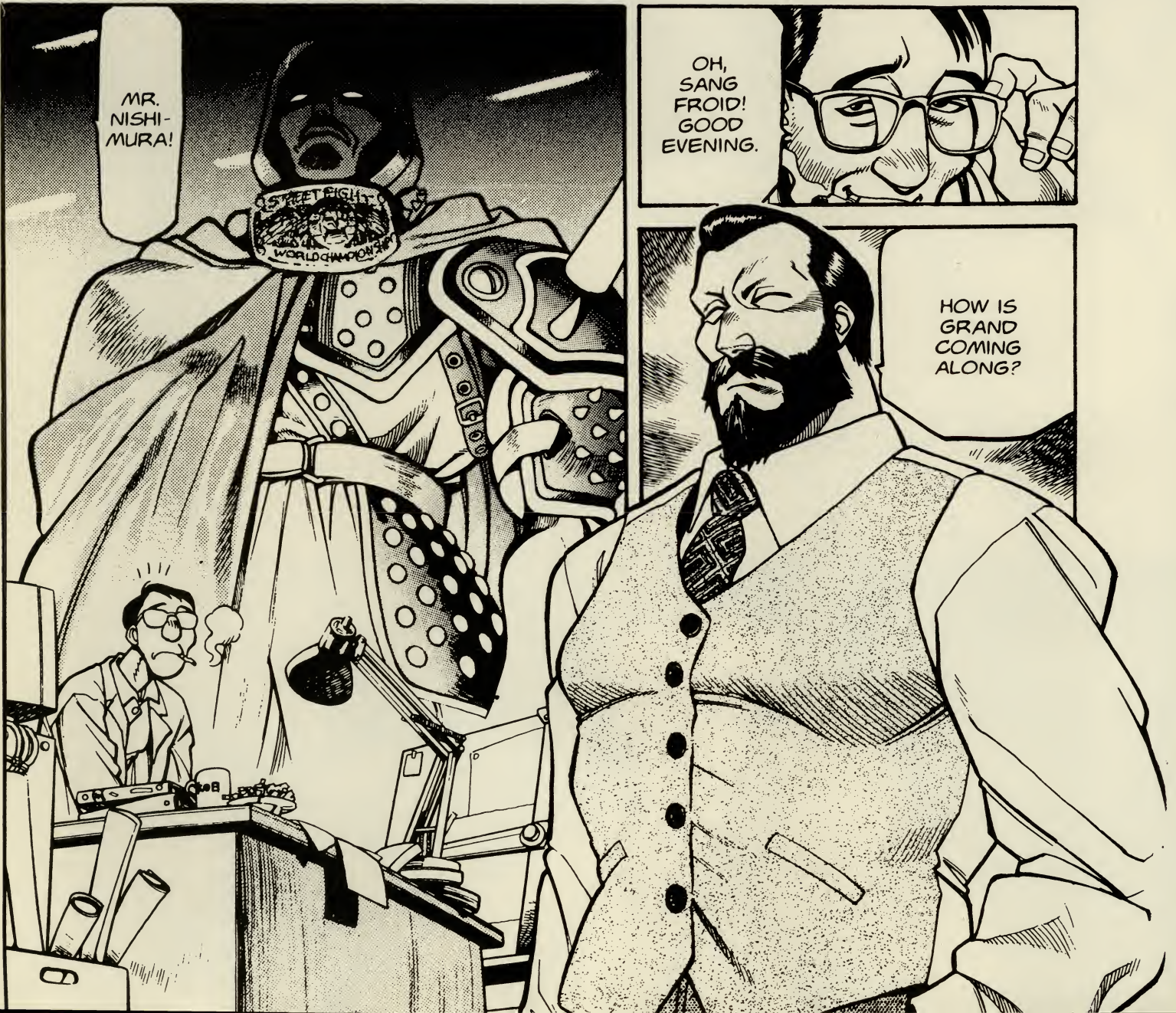




MR.
NISHI-
MURA!

OH,
SANG
FROID!
GOOD
EVENING.

HOW IS
GRAND
COMING
ALONG?





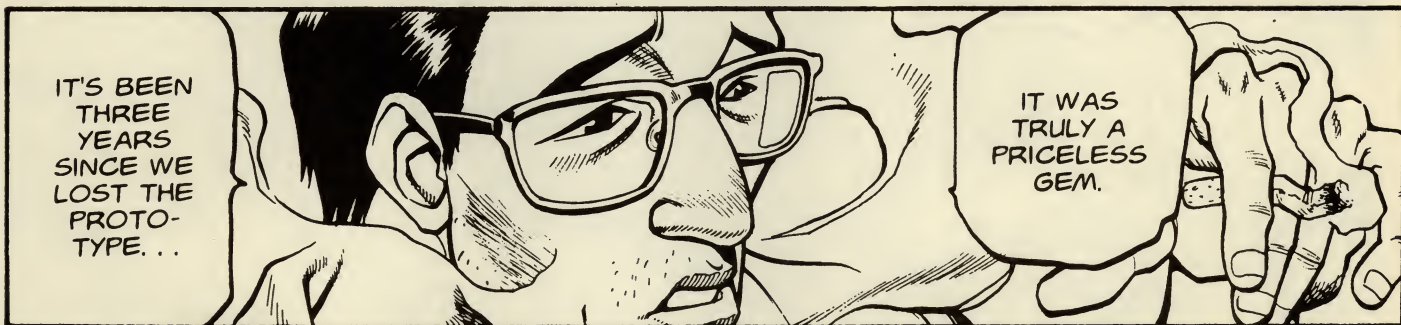
PER-
FECTLY,
OF
COURSE.

I HOPE
MATERIAL
OF HIS
CALIBER
WILL SHOW
UP THIS
YEAR
FOR THE
GAMES.

OF
COURSE!
IT JUST
WOULDN'T
BE THE
BATTLE
RAVE,
OTHERWISE.



BUT I DON'T
THINK ANYTHING
WILL BE SUPERIOR
TO THE
PROTOTYPE.



IT'S BEEN
THREE
YEARS
SINCE WE
LOST THE
PROTO-
TYPE...

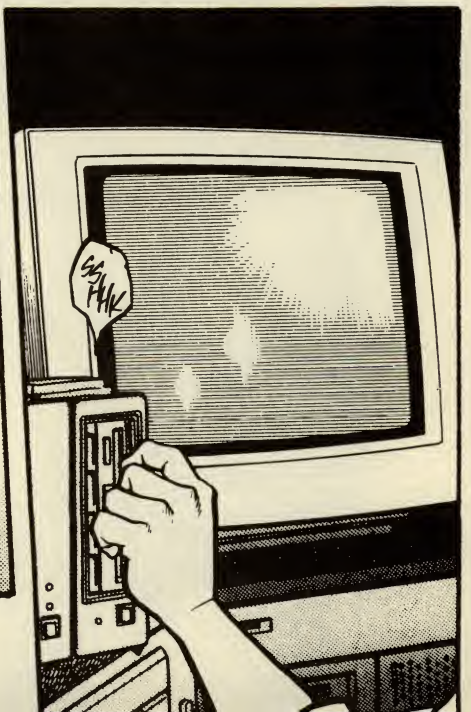
IT WAS
TRULY A
PRICELESS
GEM.

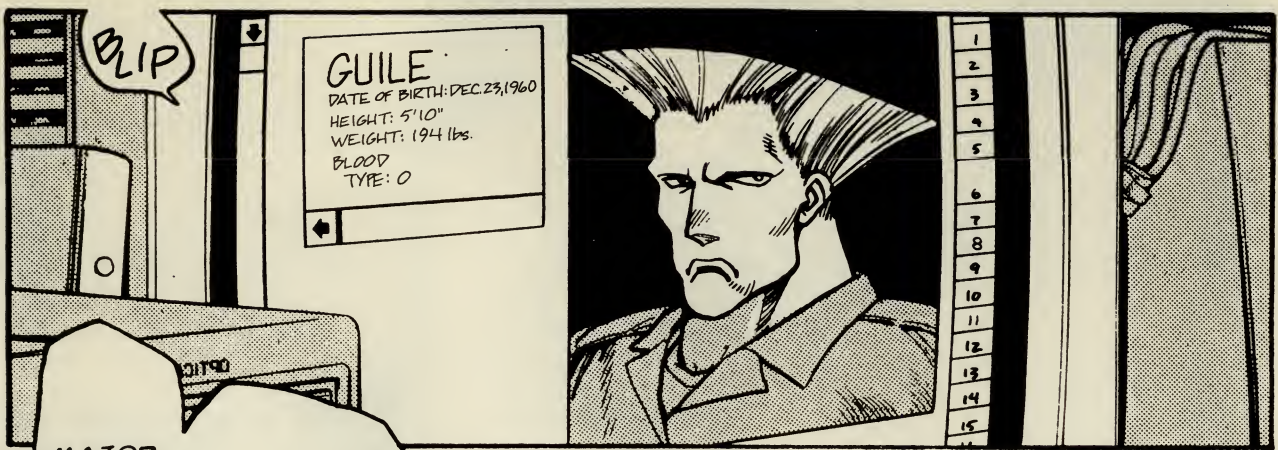


YOU DO
NOT GET
BACK THE
THINGS YOU
LOST BY
THINKING
ABOUT
THEM.

THE
SAME
GOES
FOR TIME.

YOU'RE
ASKING ME
TO LOOK
THROUGH
THE FILES
OF THE
BATTLE
RAVE COM-
PETITORS,
RIGHT?



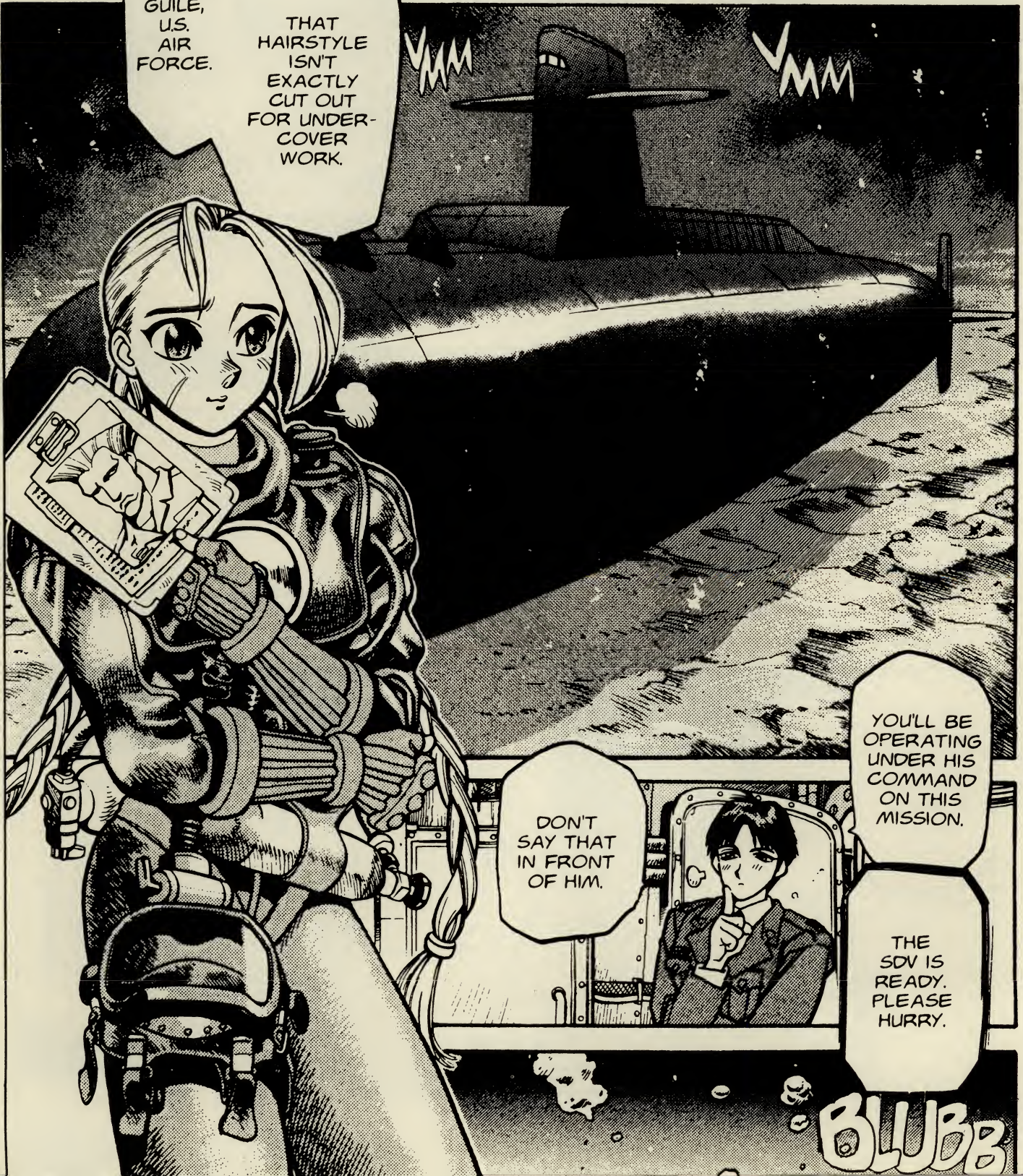


BLIP

MAJOR
GUILLE,
U.S.
AIR
FORCE.

THAT
HAIRSTYLE
ISN'T
EXACTLY
CUT OUT
FOR UNDER-
COVER
WORK.

GUILLE
DATE OF BIRTH: DEC. 23, 1960
HEIGHT: 5'10"
WEIGHT: 194 lbs.
BLOOD
TYPE: O

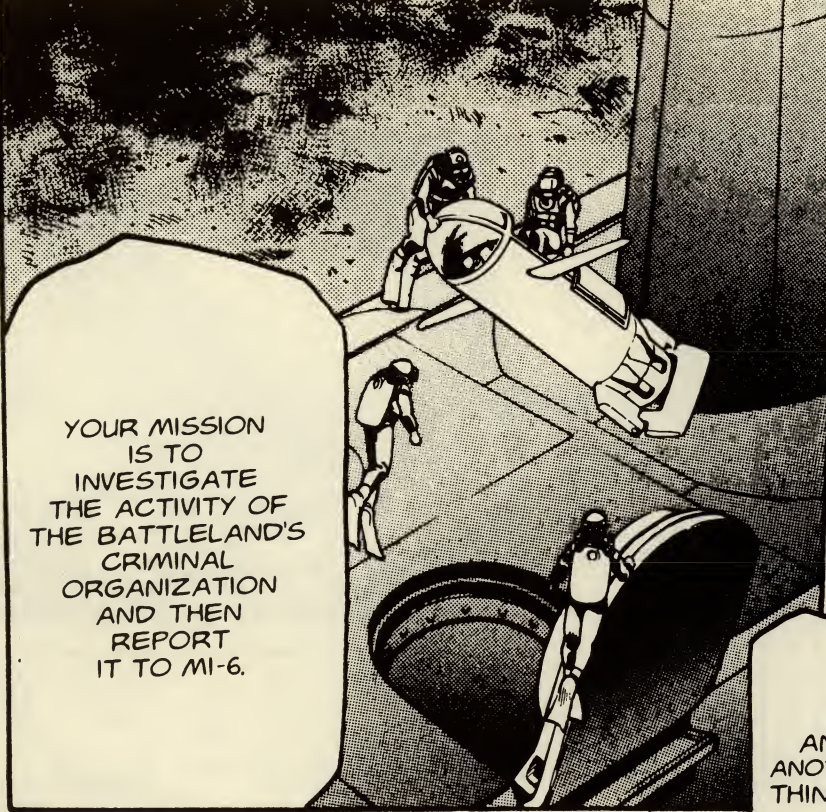


DON'T
SAY THAT
IN FRONT
OF HIM.

YOU'LL BE
OPERATING
UNDER HIS
COMMAND
ON THIS
MISSION.

THE
SDV IS
READY.
PLEASE
HURRY.

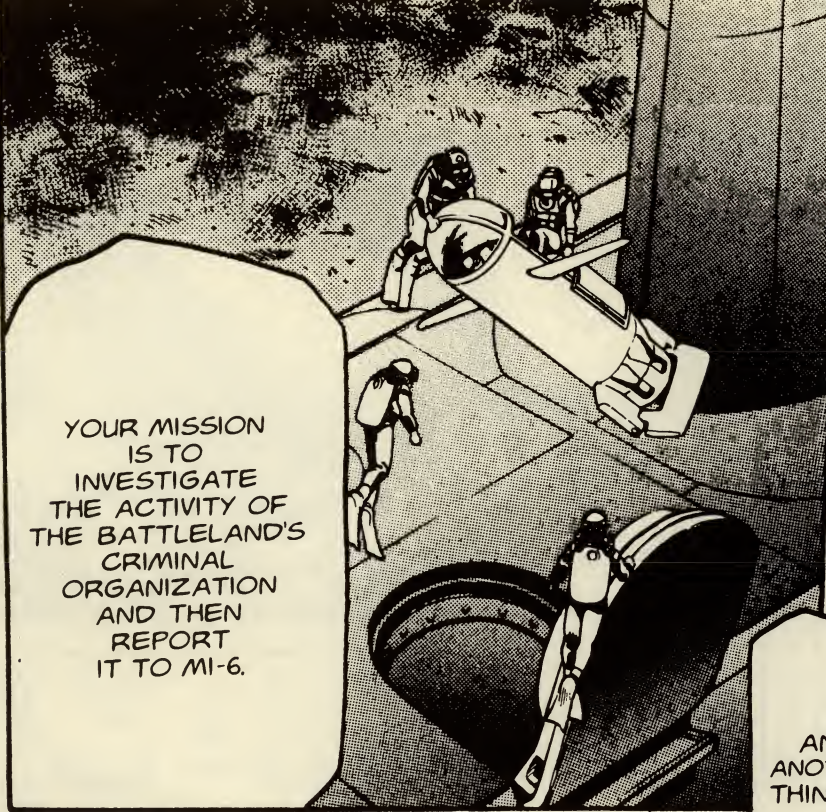
BLUBB



YOUR MISSION
IS TO
INVESTIGATE
THE ACTIVITY OF
THE BATTLELAND'S
CRIMINAL
ORGANIZATION
AND THEN
REPORT
IT TO MI-6.



AND
ANOTHER
THING...

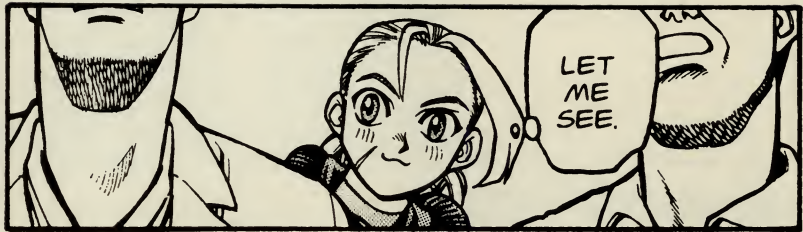
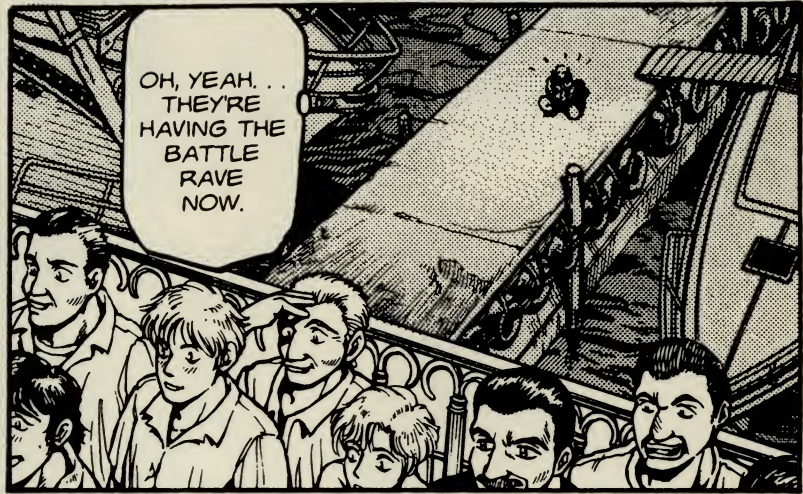
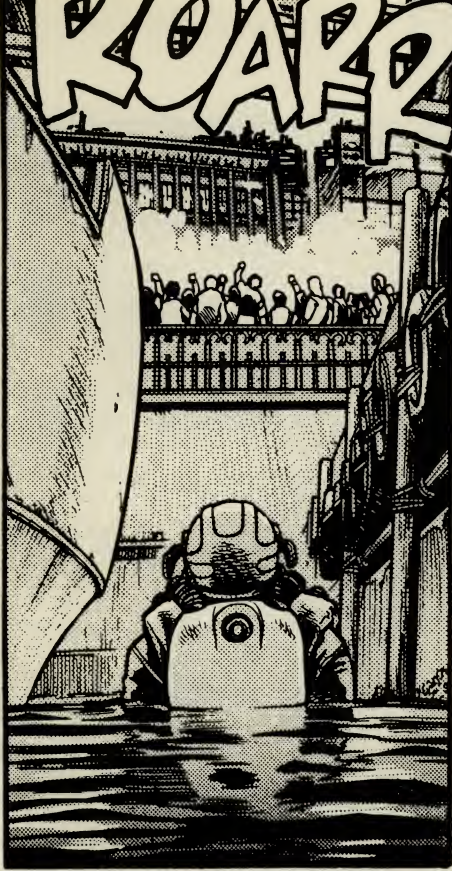


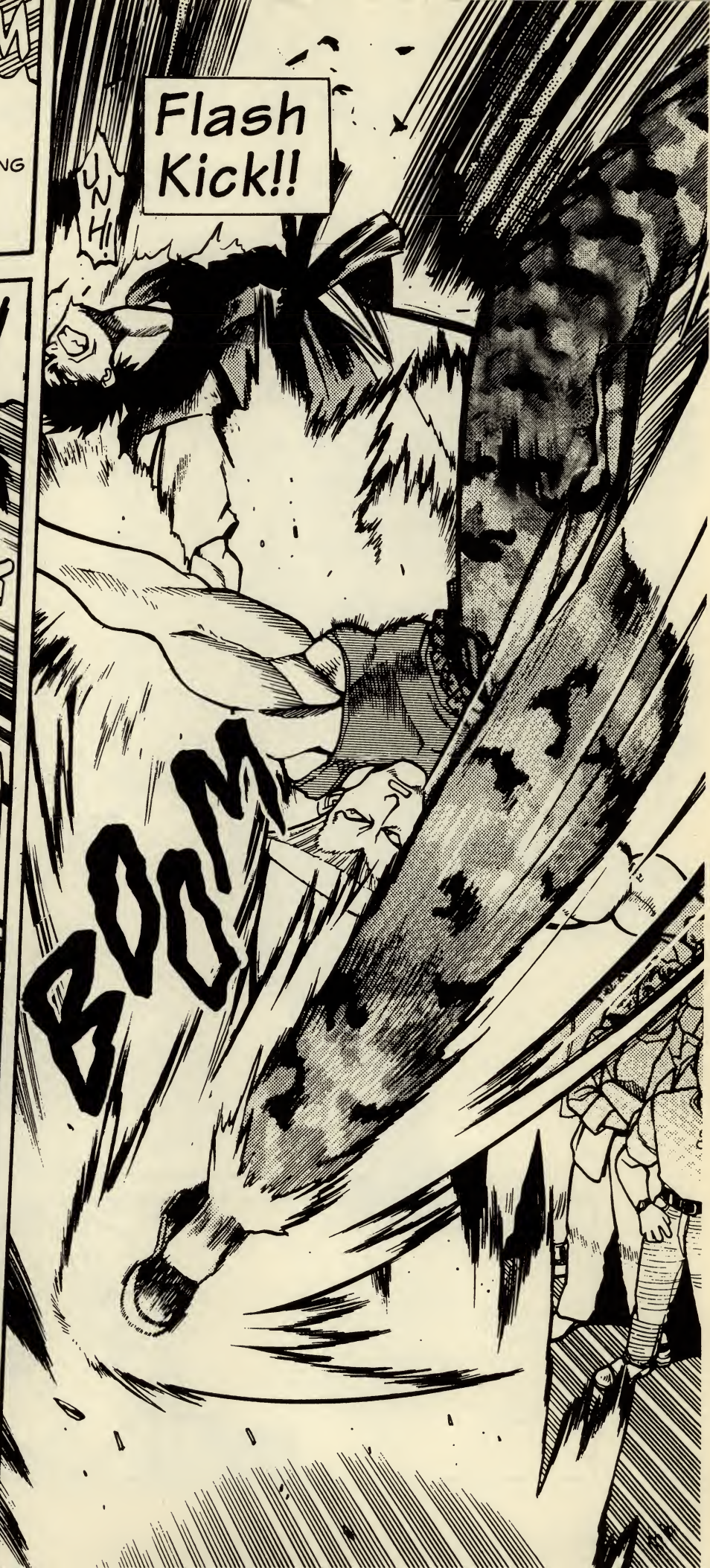
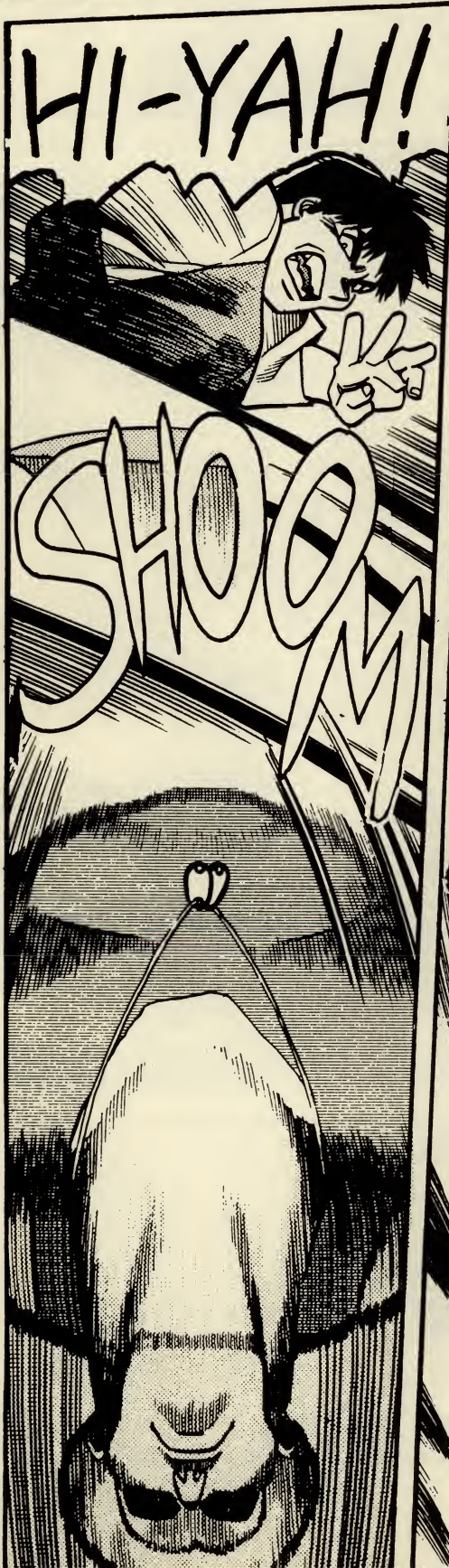
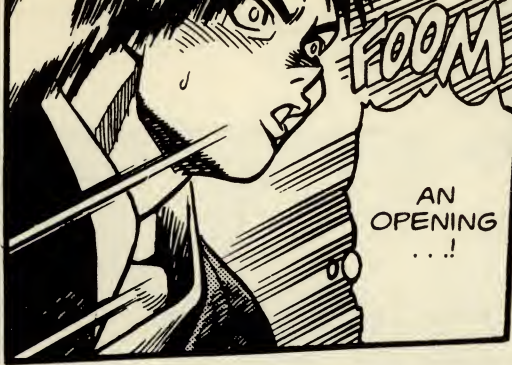
DON'T DO
OR SAY
ANYTHING
THAT WOULD
TARNISH
THE
REPUTATION
OF THE
SPECIAL
OPERATIONS
SECTION
OF MI-6.



THAT
DEPENDS
ON
MAJOR
GUILÉ...









DID YOU SEE THAT !?

AN EASY VICTORY!

HIS RIBS ARE PROBABLY BROKEN. DON'T MOVE HIM UNTIL HELP ARRIVES.

MAJOR GUILF! WHAT THE HELL D'YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

DON'T YOU KNOW? THE **BATTLE RAVE** IS GOING ON RIGHT NOW!

FAPP

THE CONTEST TO EARN THE TITLE OF THE GREATEST MARTIAL ARTIST IN THE WORLD-- AND THE PRIZE MONEY...

BATTLE RAVE

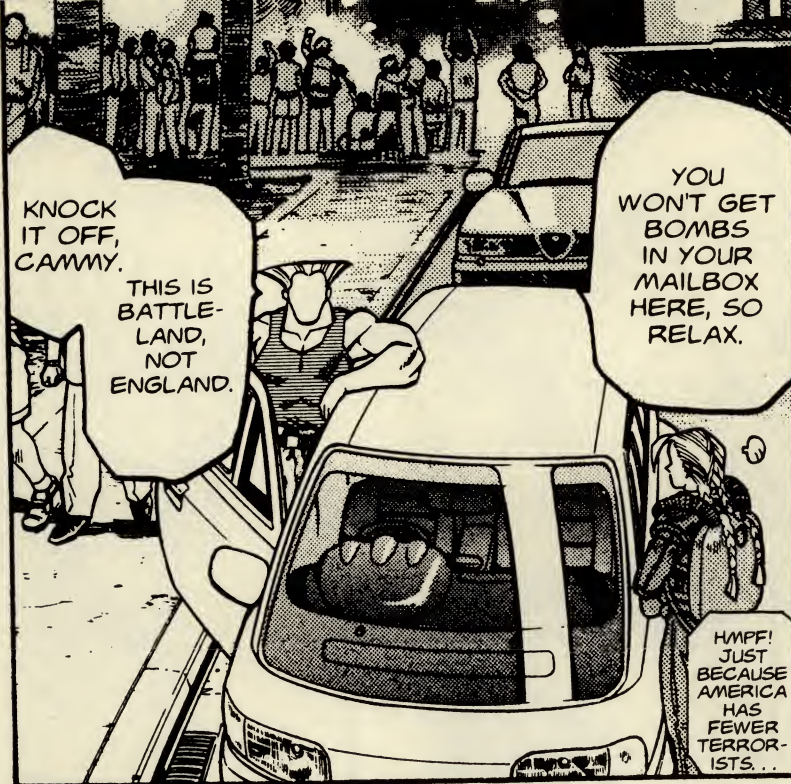
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT!

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

MAJOR GUILF.

THE MOST BASIC UNDERCOVER PROCEDURES STRESS POSING AS A CIVILIAN AND NOT DRAWING ATTENTION TO YOUR-SELF!

I WAS TAUGHT AT THE S.O.S. THAT THE MINUTE YOUR COVER IS BLOWN, YOU'RE ALREADY DEAD!



KNOCK
IT OFF,
CAMMY.

THIS IS
BATTLE-
LAND,
NOT
ENGLAND.

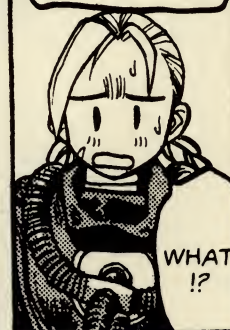
YOU
WON'T GET
BOMBS
IN YOUR
MAILBOX
HERE, SO
RELAX.

HMPF!
JUST
BECAUSE
AMERICA
HAS
FEWER
TERROR-
ISTS...

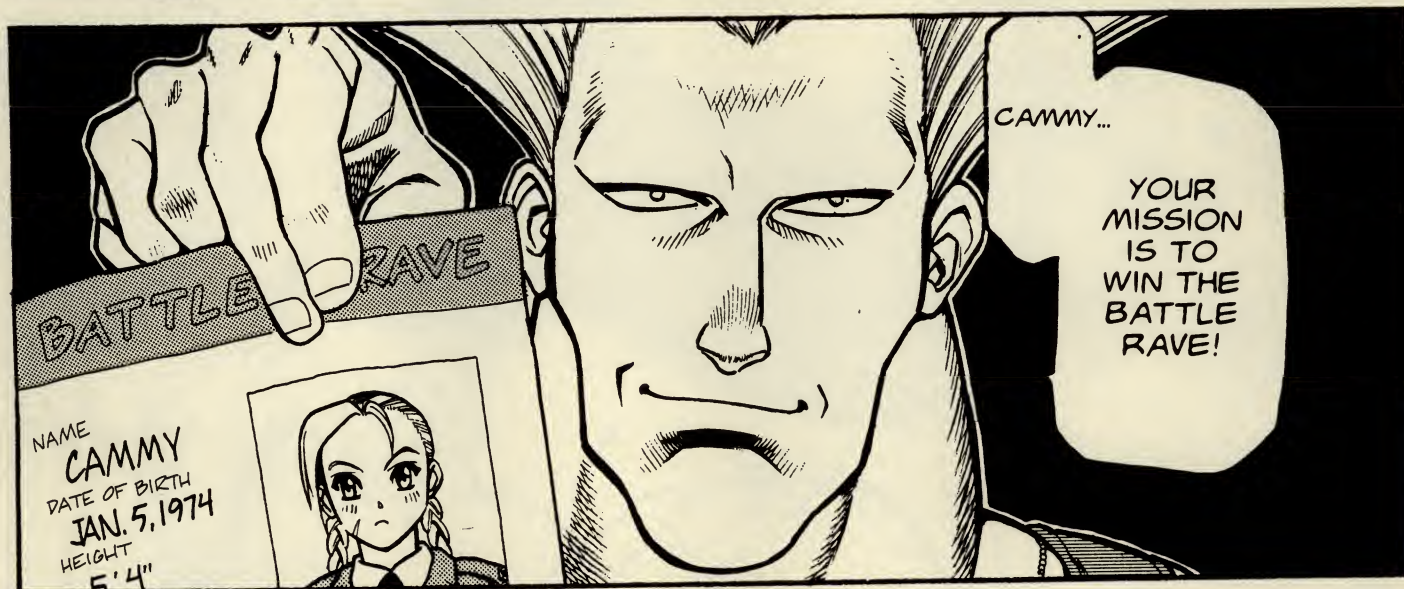


BE-
SIDES
...

I'VE
ALREADY
ENTERED
YOU
IN THE
BATTLE
RAVE.



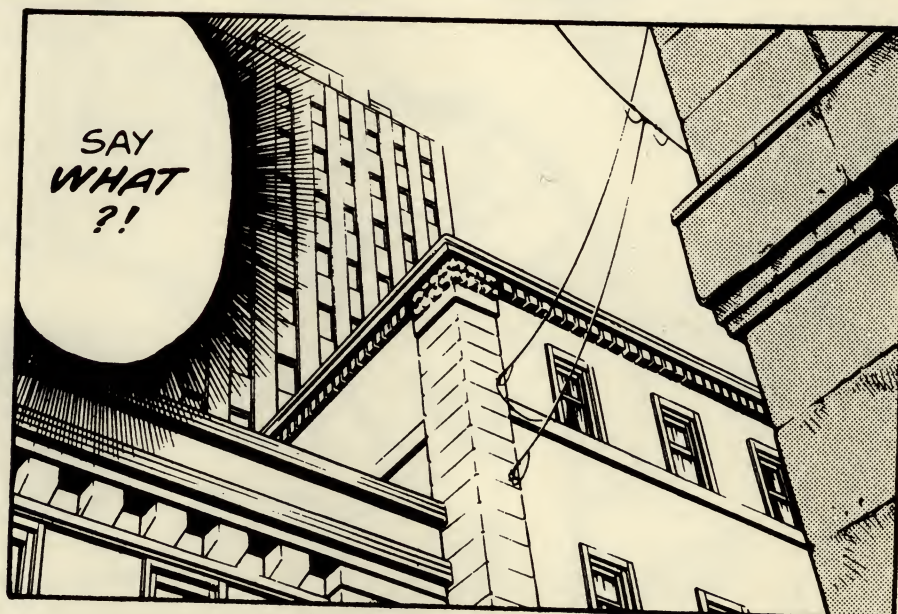
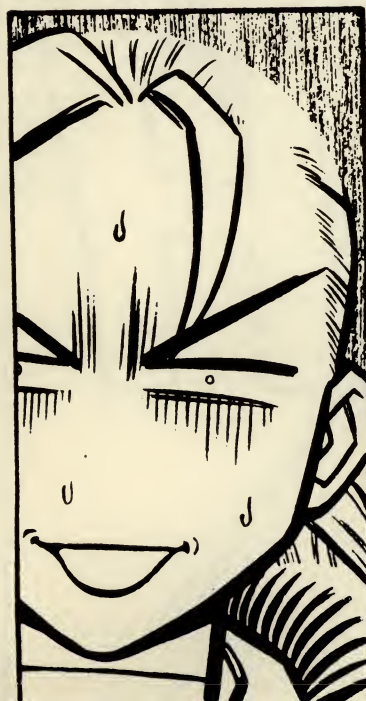
WHAT
!?



NAME
CAMMY
DATE OF BIRTH
JAN. 5, 1974
HEIGHT
5'4"

CAMMY...

YOUR
MISSION
IS TO
WIN THE
BATTLE
RAVE!



SAY
WHAT
?!



THAT WAS EASY.

W-WAIT!
I GIVE UP!

ROOAR

SHE BEAT TEN GUYS!

WHAT A DARK HORSE!

YACHT CLUB

YOU'RE TOUGH!

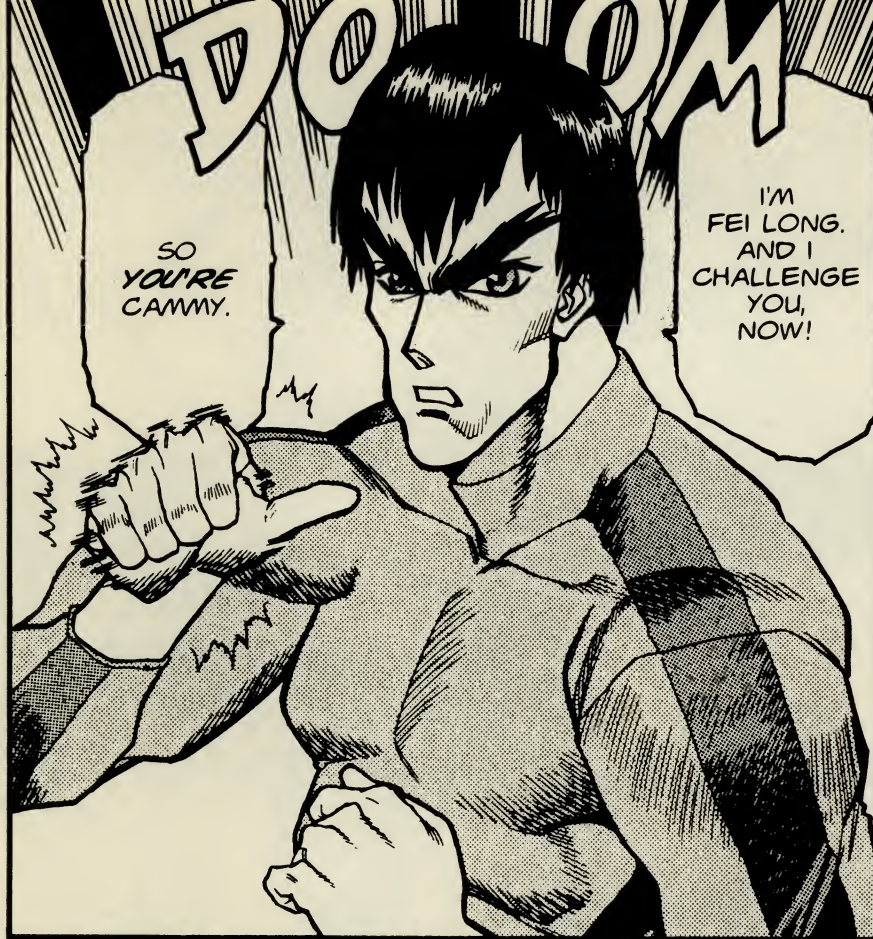
KICK SOME, CAMMY!

YOU'RE THE SAME AGE AS MY GRAND-DAUGHTER—I'M ROOTING FOR YOU!

YOU REPRESENT US WOMEN! GOOD LUCK!

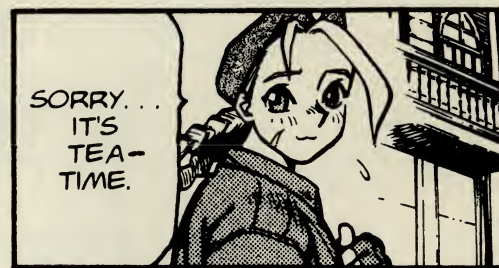
CAMMY, YOU COULD BE THE YOUNGEST CHAMPION EVER!

UGH... I'M FAMOUS ALREADY.

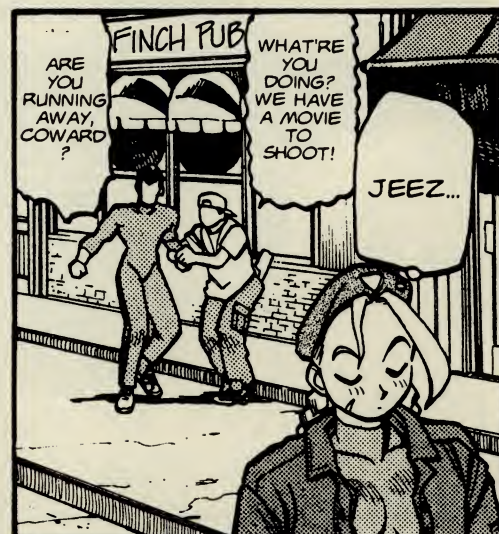


SO
YOU'RE
CAMMY.

I'M
FEI LONG.
AND I
CHALLENGE
YOU,
NOW!



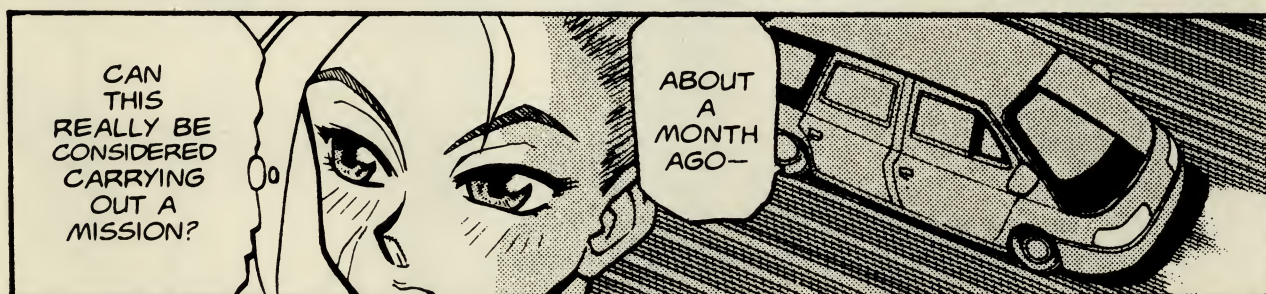
SORRY...
IT'S
TEA-
TIME.



ARE
YOU
RUNNING
AWAY,
COWARD
?

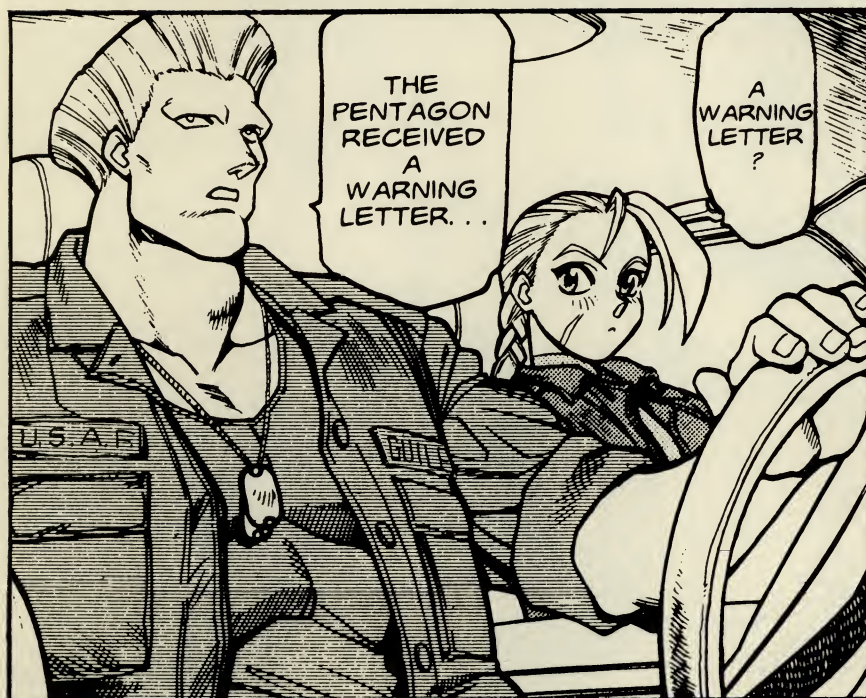
WHAT'RE
YOU
DOING?
WE HAVE
A MOVIE
TO
SHOOT!

JEEZ...



CAN
THIS
REALLY BE
CONSIDERED
CARRYING
OUT A
MISSION?

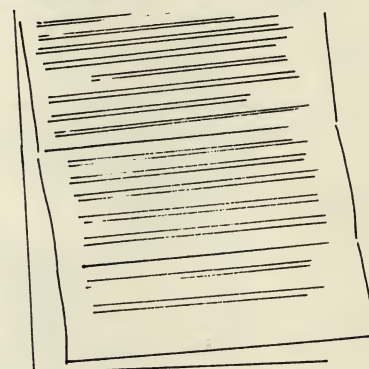
ABOUT
A
MONTH
AGO—

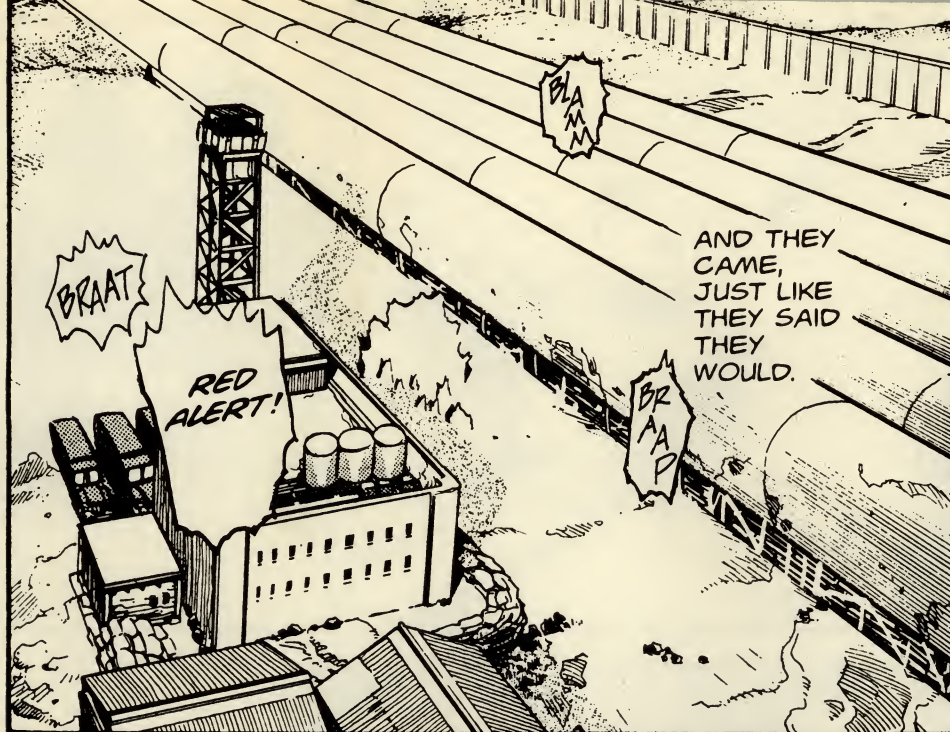


THE
PENTAGON
RECEIVED
A
WARNING
LETTER...

A
WARNING
LETTER
?

IT SAID THAT A CRUDE-
OIL PIPELINE IN THE MIDDLE
EAST WOULD BE ATTACKED.
THE SPECIFIED TARGET WAS
IN AN AREA MY UNIT WAS
ASSIGNED TO PROTECT.





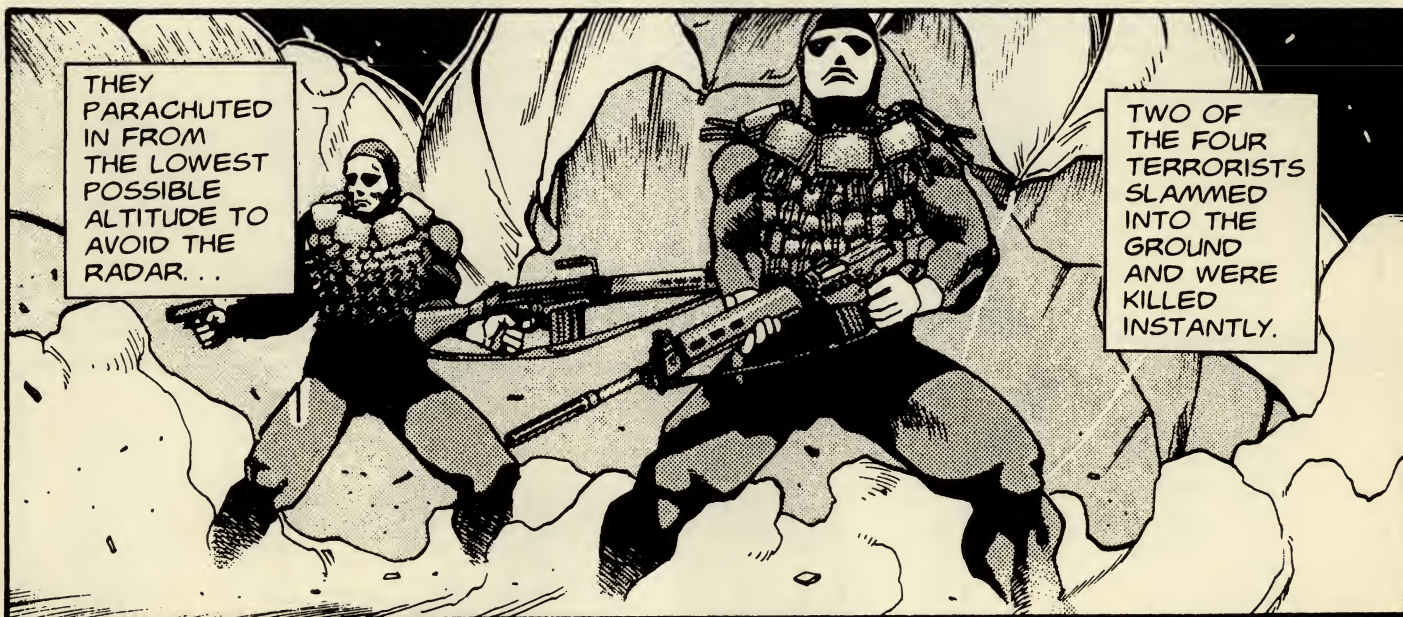
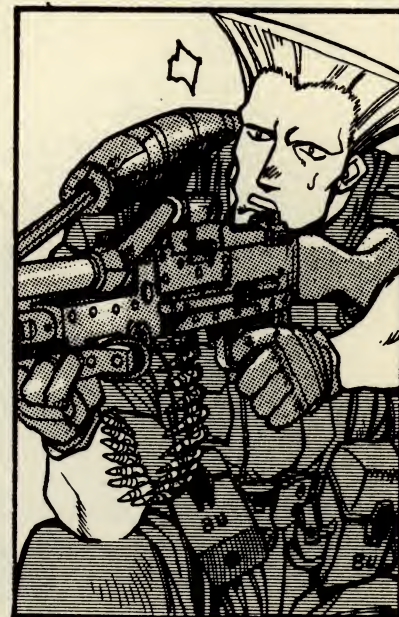
BRAAT

RED
ALERT!

BLAM

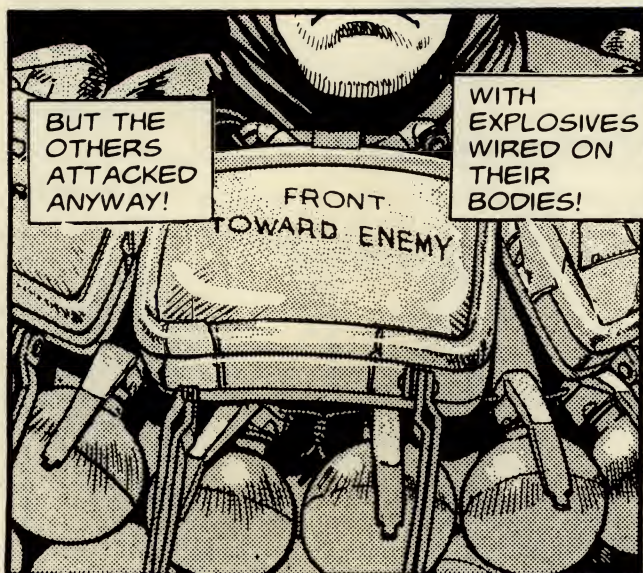
BRAAP

AND THEY
CAME,
JUST LIKE
THEY SAID
THEY
WOULD.



THEY
PARACHUTED
IN FROM
THE LOWEST
POSSIBLE
ALTITUDE TO
AVOID THE
RADAR. . .

TWO OF
THE FOUR
TERRORISTS
SLAMMED
INTO THE
GROUND
AND WERE
KILLED
INSTANTLY.



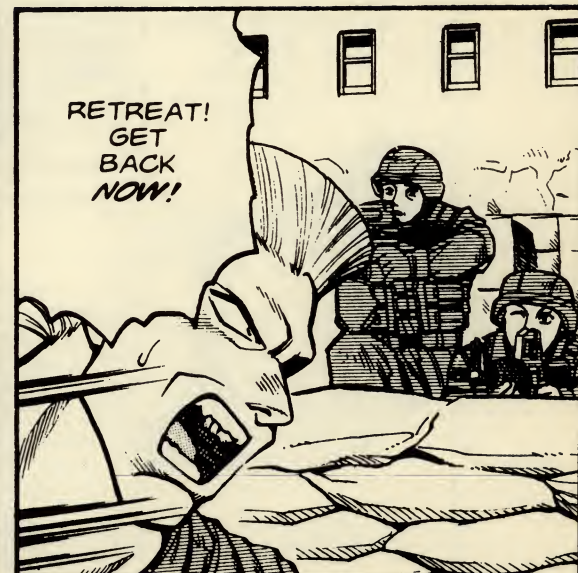
BUT THE
OTHERS
ATTACKED
ANYWAY!

FRONT
TOWARD ENEMY

WITH
EXPLOSIVES
WIRED ON
THEIR
BODIES!



!!



RETREAT!
GET
BACK
NOW!

BRUMBLE

THEY
FINISHED
THEIR JOB--
AND THERE
WASN'T
ANYTHING I
COULD DO
TO STOP
THEM!

I'LL NEVER
FORGET
THEIR EYES.

THEY WERE EYES
THAT ACCEPTED
DEATH AS AN
INEVITABILITY...

...AND
THEY WERE
LOOKING
FORWARD
TO IT!

THAT'S
A TAD
BIASED,
MAJOR
GUILLE.

EMOTIONS
TWIST
FACTS
QUITE A
LOT.

SKRTCH

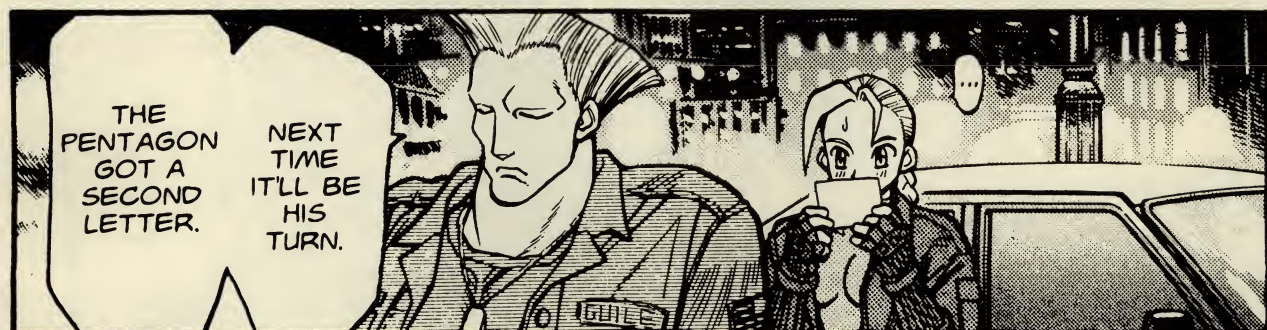
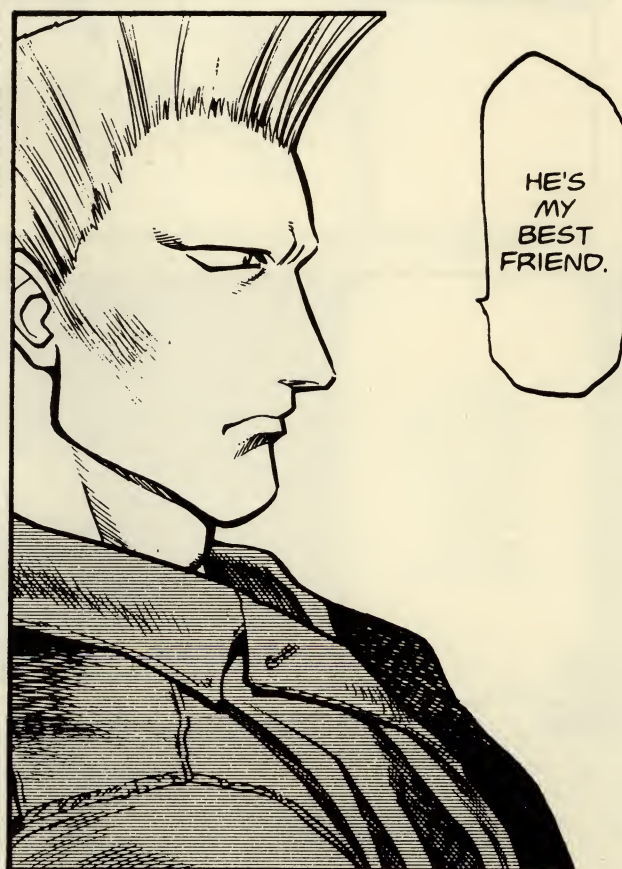
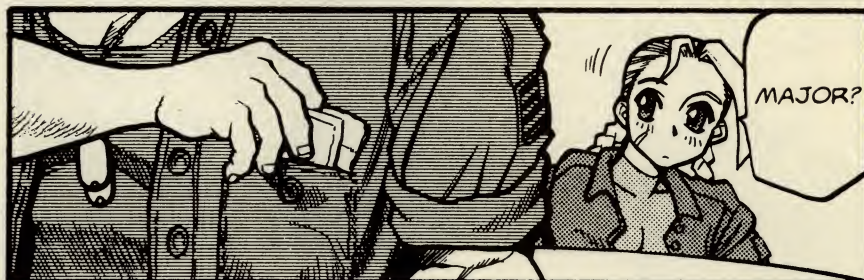
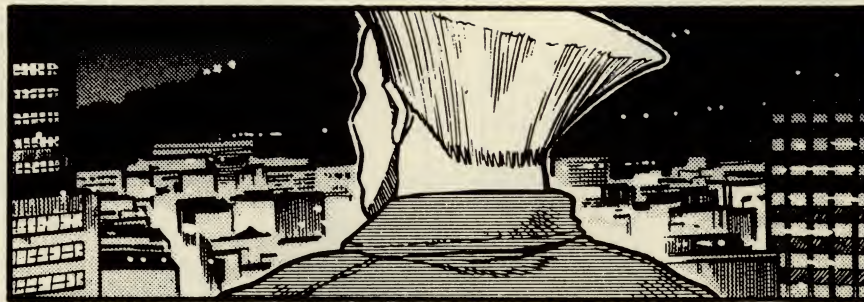
YOU'RE
PRETTY
COLD.

WHAT
DOES THAT
HAVE
TO DO
WITH THE
BATTLE
RAVE?

FIVE
PEOPLE HAVE
DISAPPEARED
AFTER
PARTICIPATING
IN THE BATTLE
RAVE OF THE
PAST THREE
YEARS.

THE
TERROR-
ISTS
INCLUDED
FOUR OF
THEM.

THEY
WERE ALL
VETERANS
WHO WERE
CANDIDATES
FOR THE
CHAMPION-
SHIP.



UM...
MAJOR
GUILT...

I WAS
INSENSITIVE
WHEN
I SAID YOU
WERE
BIASED.

UM...

NOW...
BACK TO
BUSINESS.

THIS
WAY.

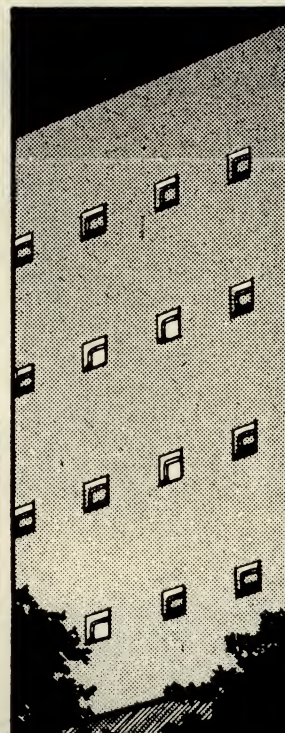
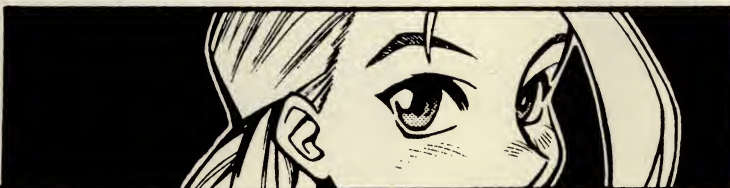
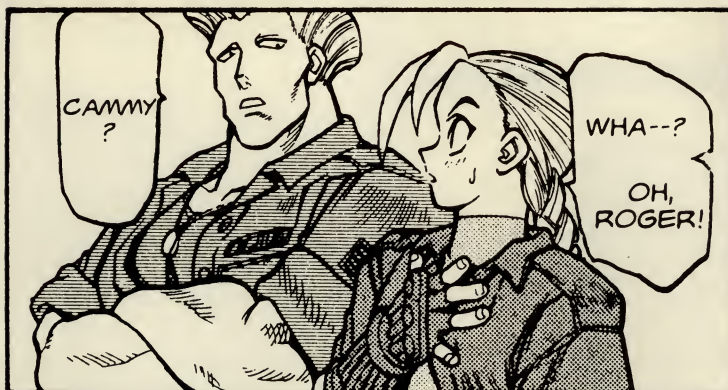
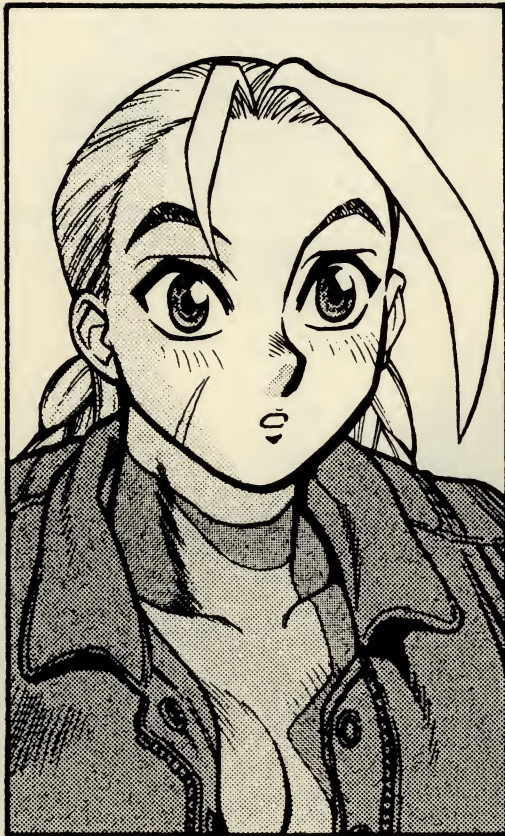
DON'T
WORRY,
IT'S MY
FAULT FOR
TALKING
TOO
MUCH.

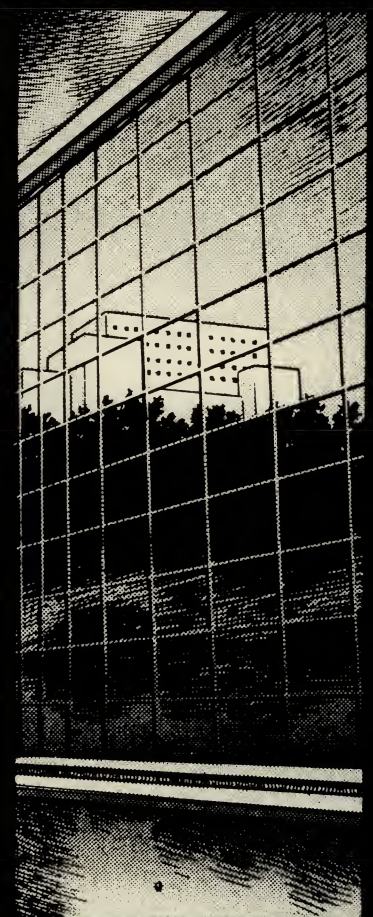
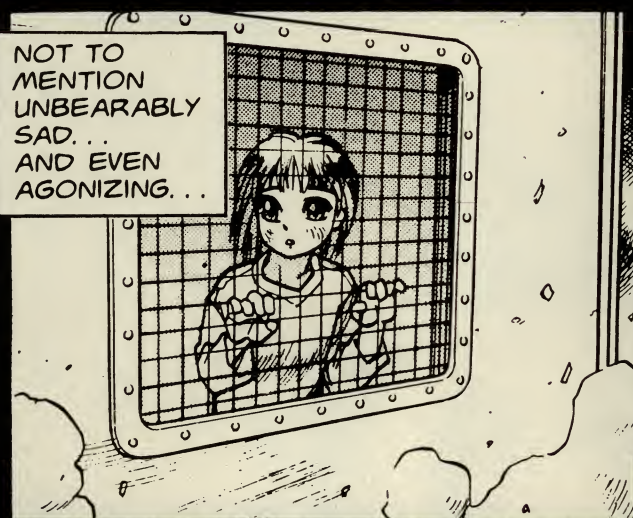
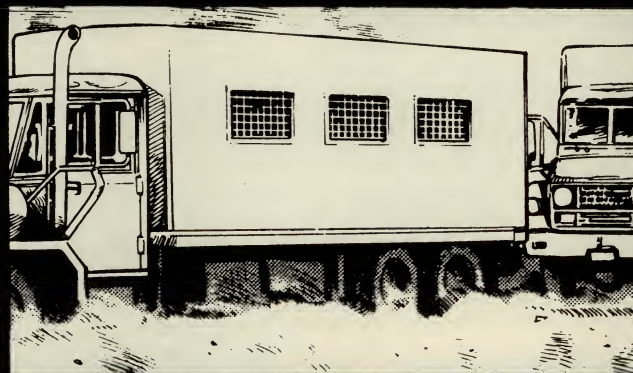
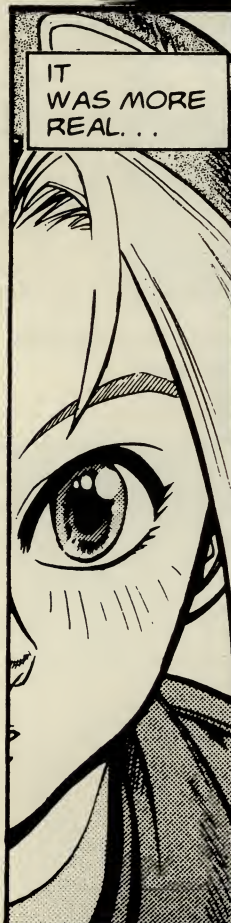
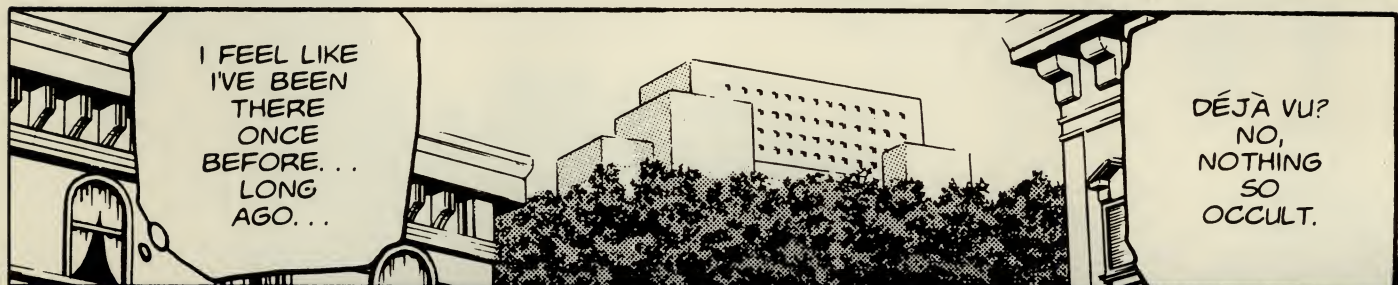
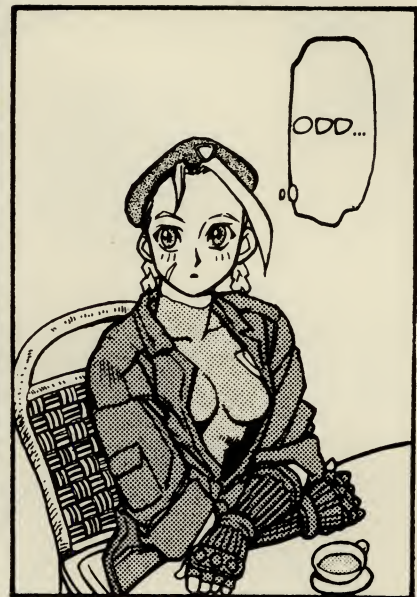
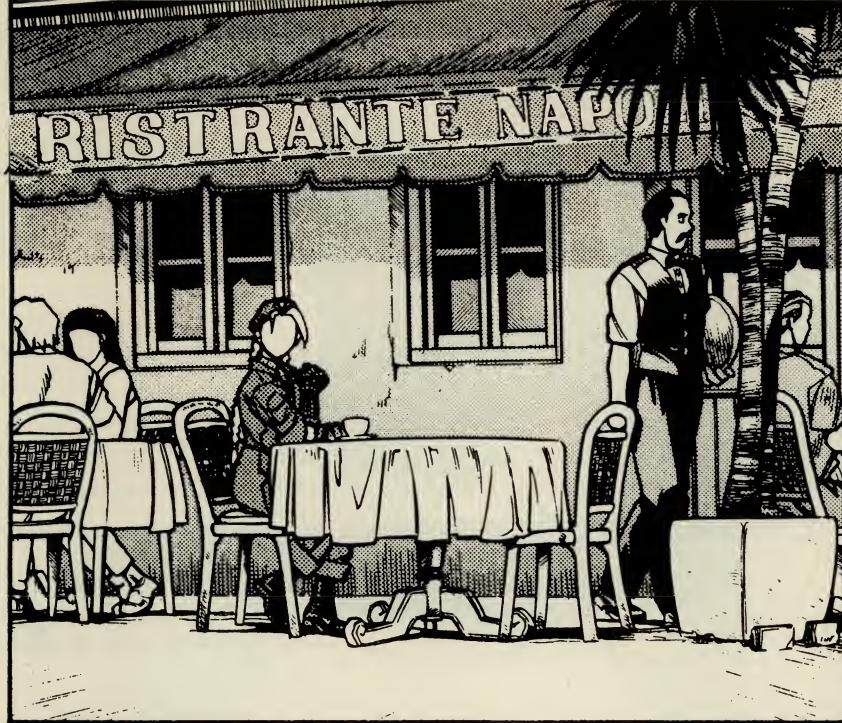
HEH

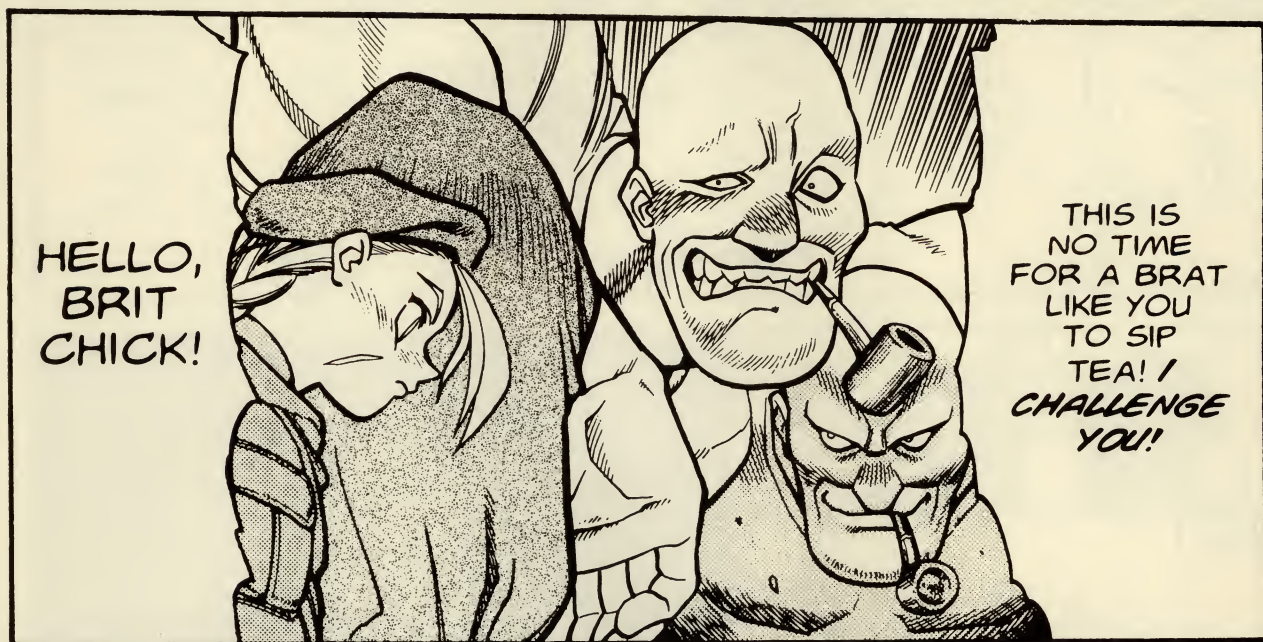
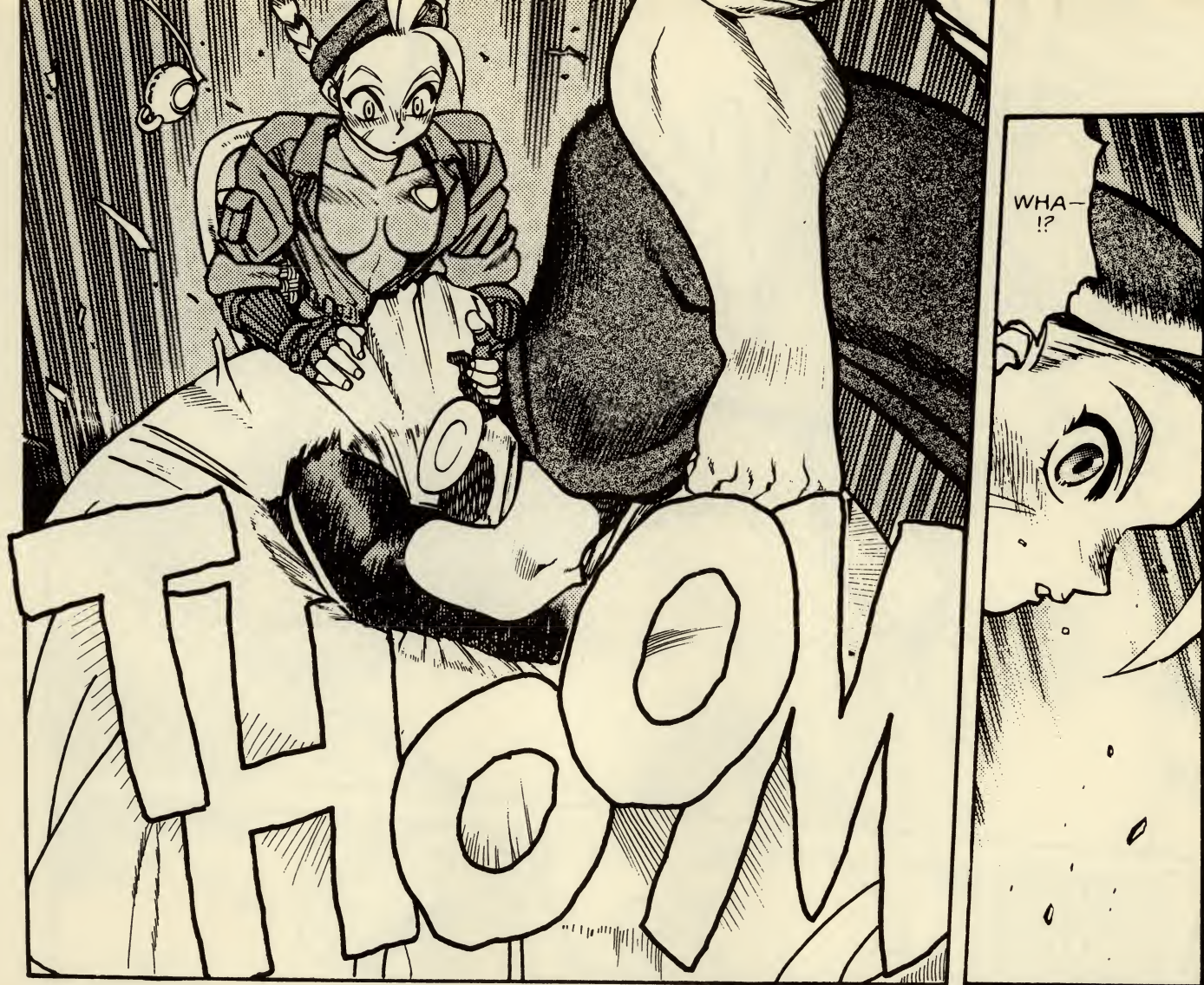
SO YOU'RE
NOT JUST
A COLD-
HEARTED
FIGHTING
MACHINE.

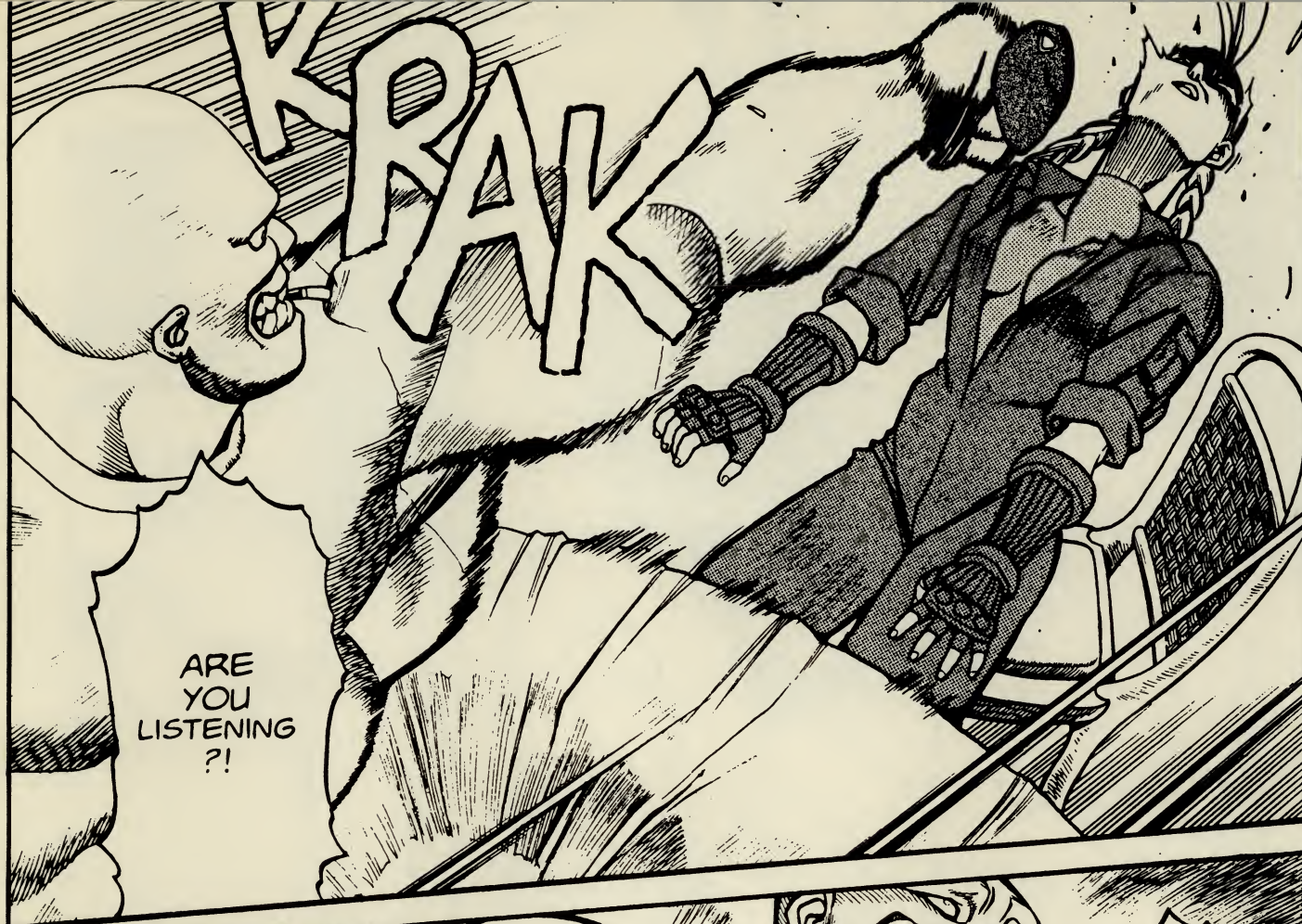
THAT
MANSION
BELONGS
TO SANG
FROID,
BATTLE
RAVE'S
SPONSOR.

HE'S PASSING
HIMSELF OFF AS A
MYSTERIOUS MULTI-
MILLIONAIRE, BUT
WE HAVE REASON
TO BELIEVE HE'S
INVOLVED IN
THESE INCIDENTS.

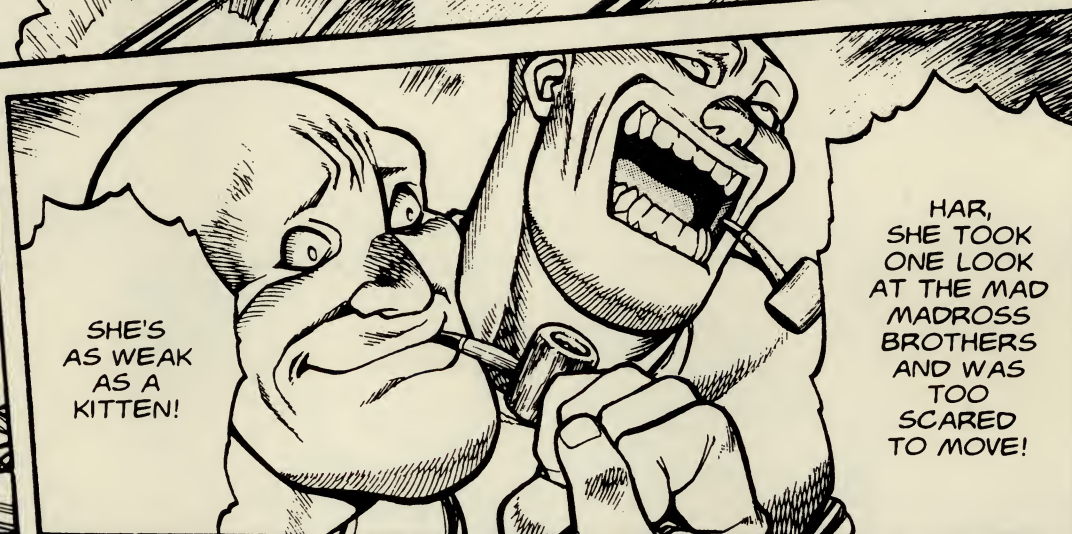






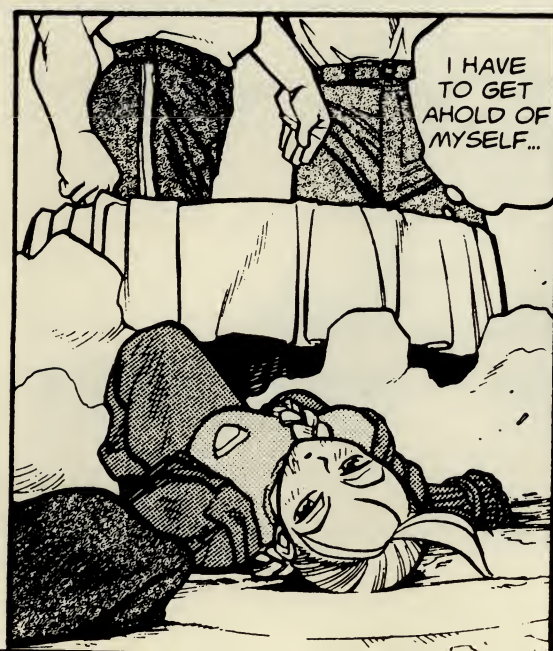


ARE
YOU
LISTENING
?!



SHE'S
AS WEAK
AS A
KITTEN!

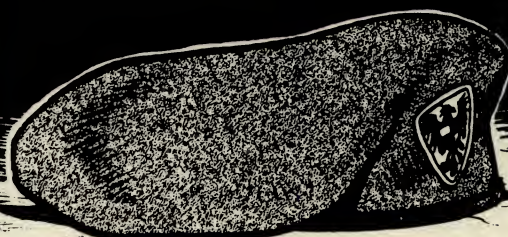
HAR,
SHE TOOK
ONE LOOK
AT THE MAD
MADROSS
BROTHERS
AND WAS
TOO
SCARED
TO MOVE!



I HAVE
TO GET
AHOLD OF
MYSELF...

THIS IS NOT
A SITUATION
WHERE
I CAN
AFFORD
TO GET
LOST IN MY
THOUGHTS.

I SHOULD
BE THINKING
ABOUT
MAJOR
GUILLE...
ABOUT MY
MISSION!

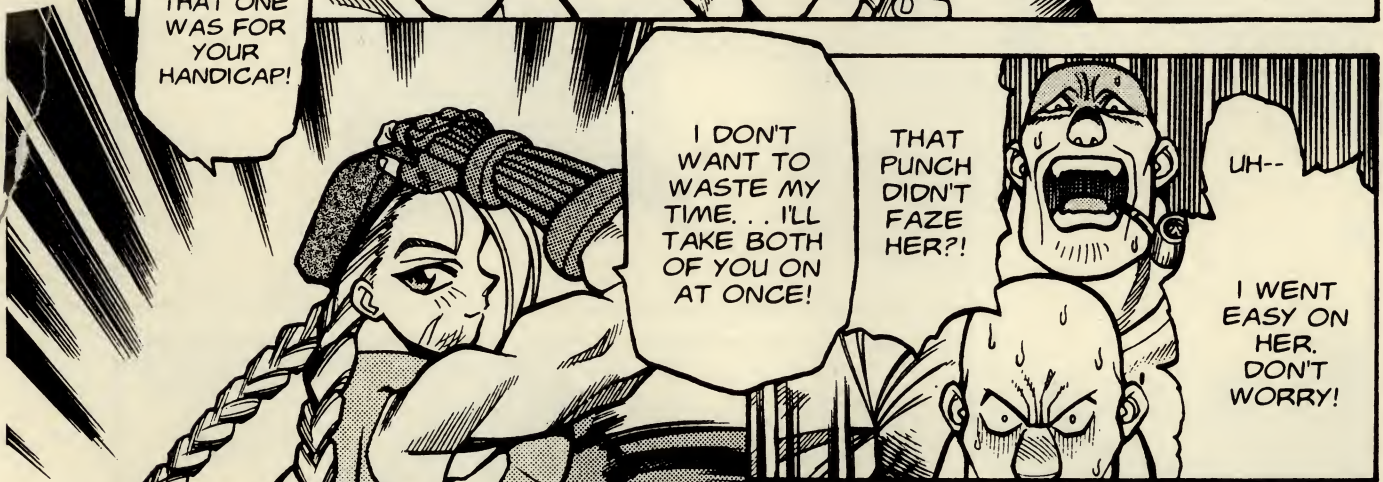




HOLD IT!

THAT ONE WAS FOR YOUR HANDICAP!

CAMMY, YOU'RE IN THE S.O.S.!!

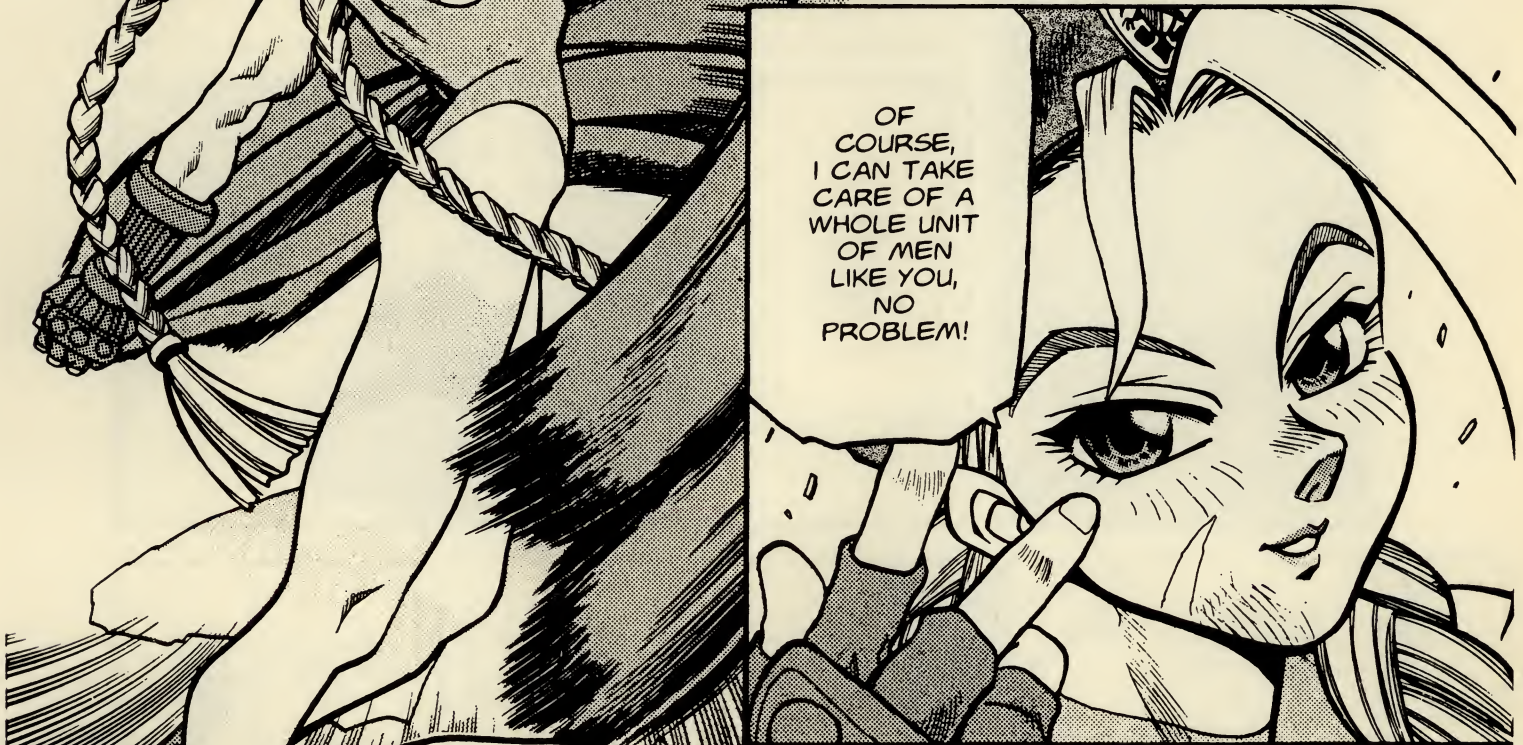


I DON'T WANT TO WASTE MY TIME... I'LL TAKE BOTH OF YOU ON AT ONCE!

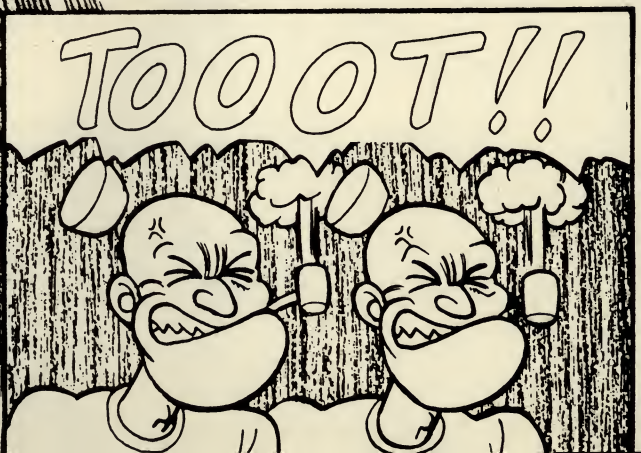
THAT PUNCH DIDN'T FAZE HER?!

UH--

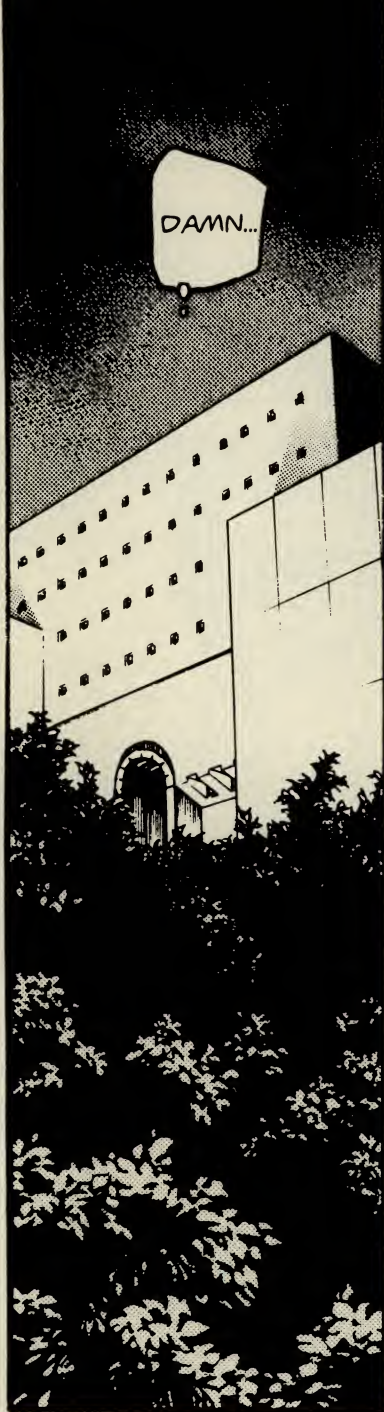
I WENT EASY ON HER. DON'T WORRY!



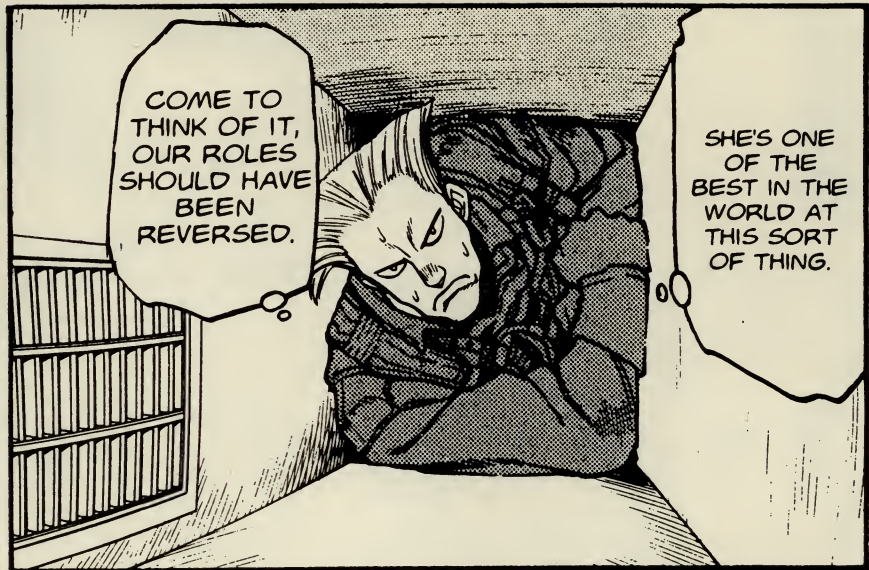
OF COURSE, I CAN TAKE CARE OF A WHOLE UNIT OF MEN LIKE YOU, NO PROBLEM!



TOOOT!!



DAMN...

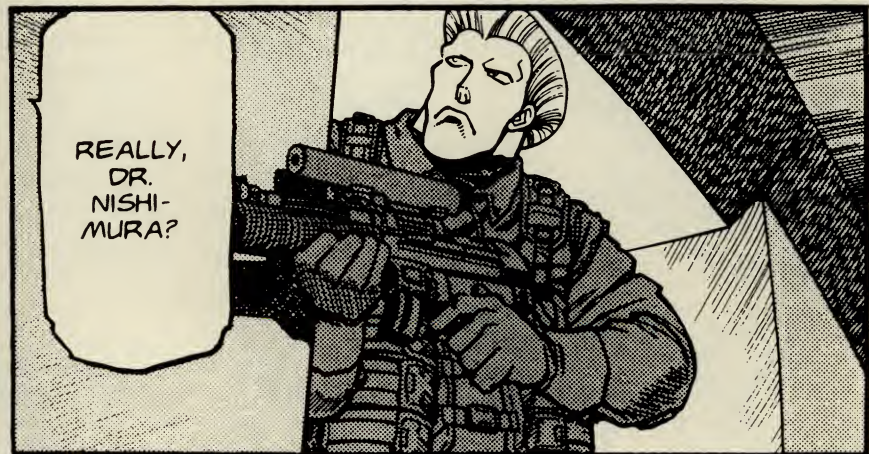


COME TO
THINK OF IT,
OUR ROLES
SHOULD HAVE
BEEN
REVERSED.

SHE'S ONE
OF THE
BEST IN THE
WORLD AT
THIS SORT
OF THING.



IT'S A
GOOD THING
THE SECURITY
IS SO LAX HERE
IN THE
MEDITERRANEAN.

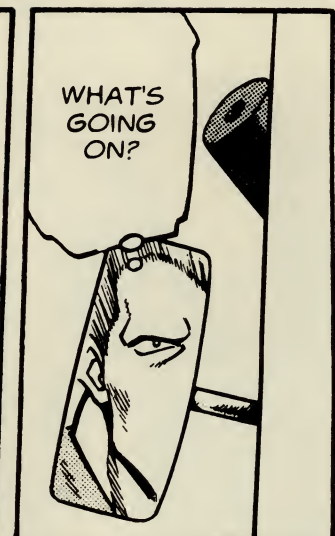


REALLY,
DR.
NISHI-
MURA?

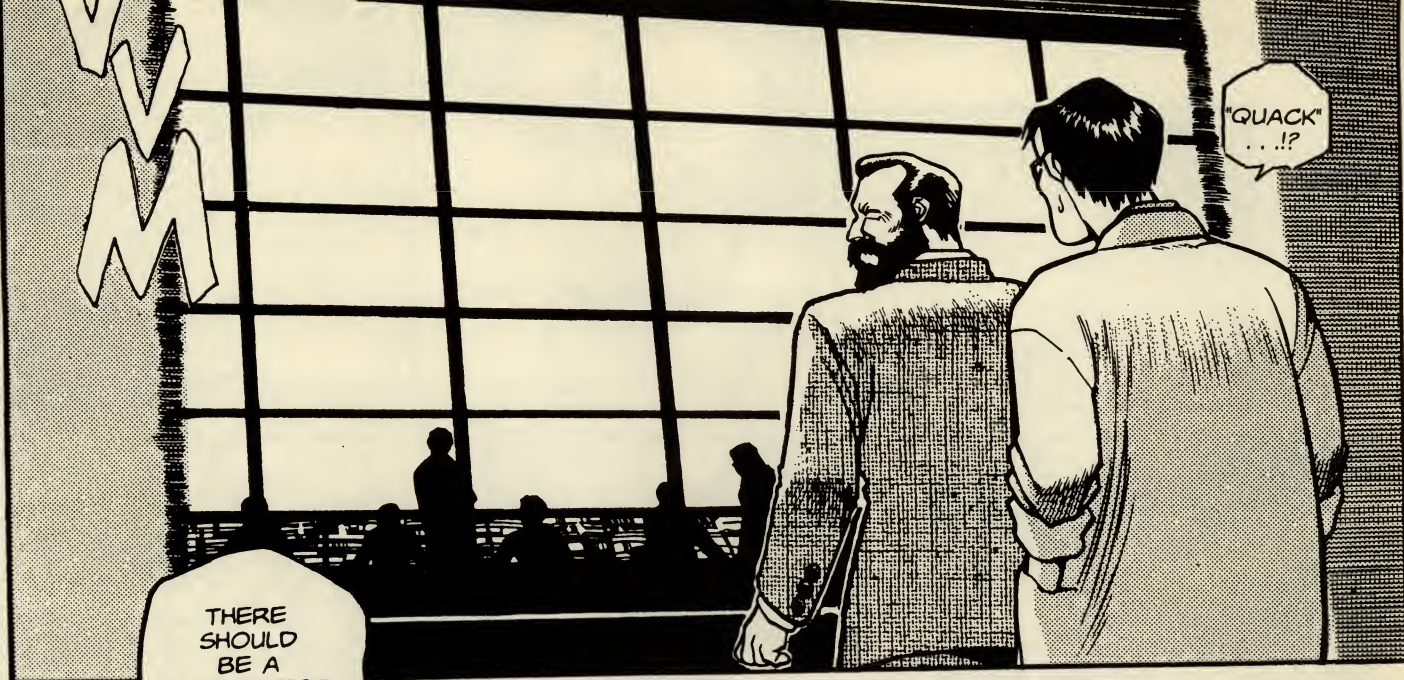


OF
COURSE, AT
THAT AGE
FEATURES
CAN
CHANGE IN
THREE
YEARS. I
CAN'T
BE
POSITIVE.

THEN
DON'T
BOTHER
ME, YOU
QUACK!



WHAT'S
GOING
ON?



THERE
SHOULD
BE A
COMPETITOR
NAMED
CAMMY
PARTICI-
PATING IN
THE BATTLE
RAVE.

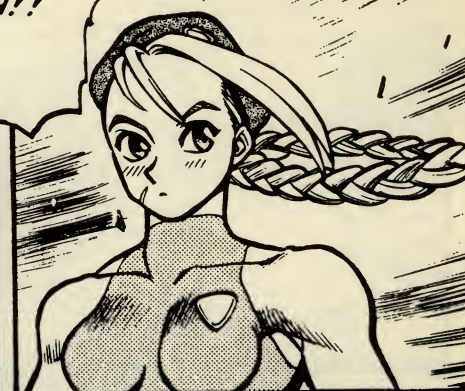


MONITOR
FIFTEEN,
SIR.



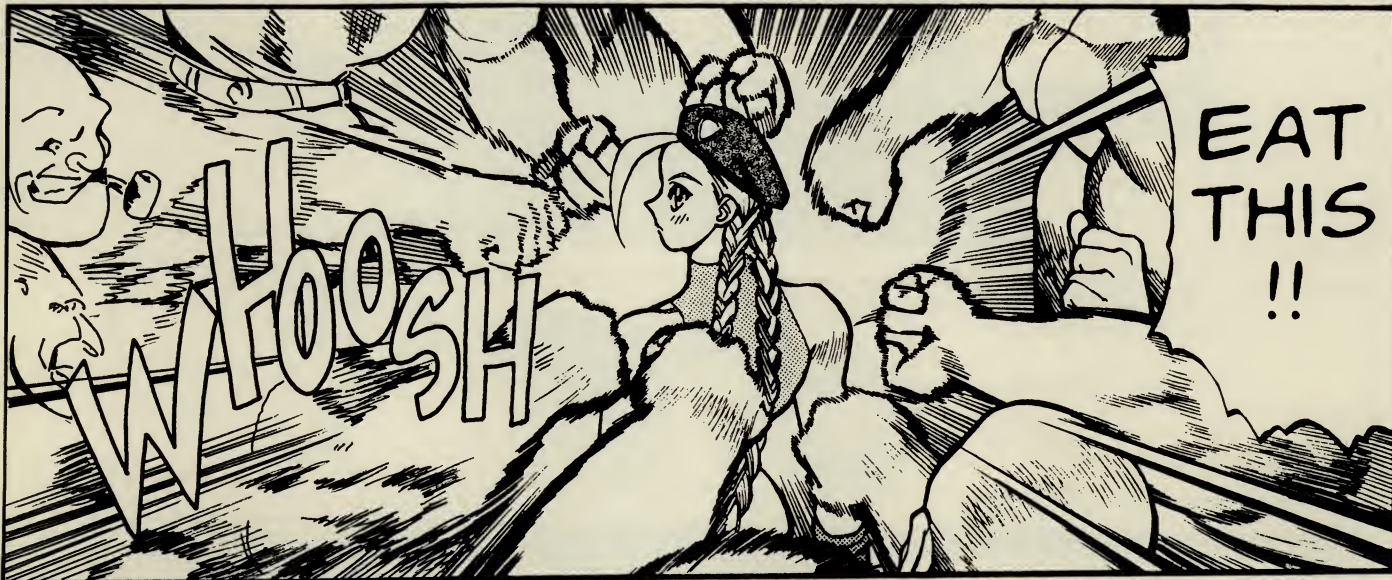
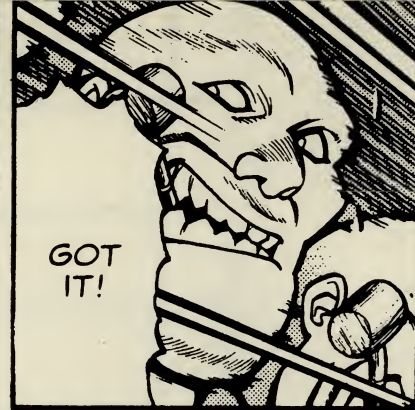
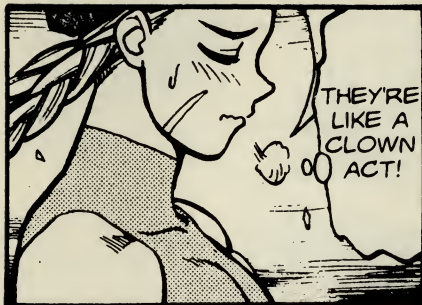
HA
HA
HA
HA!!

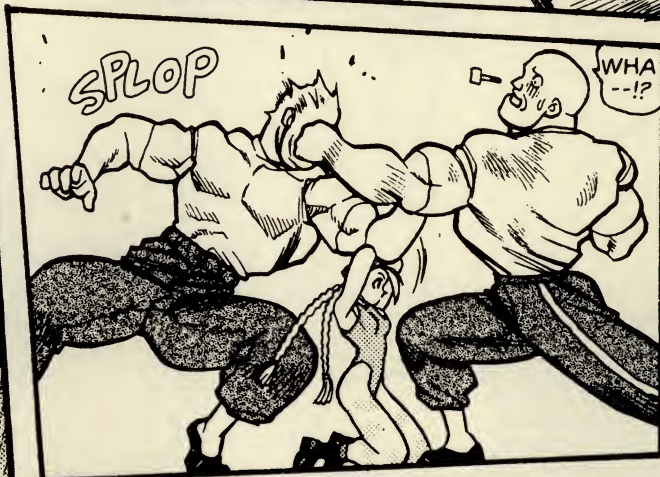
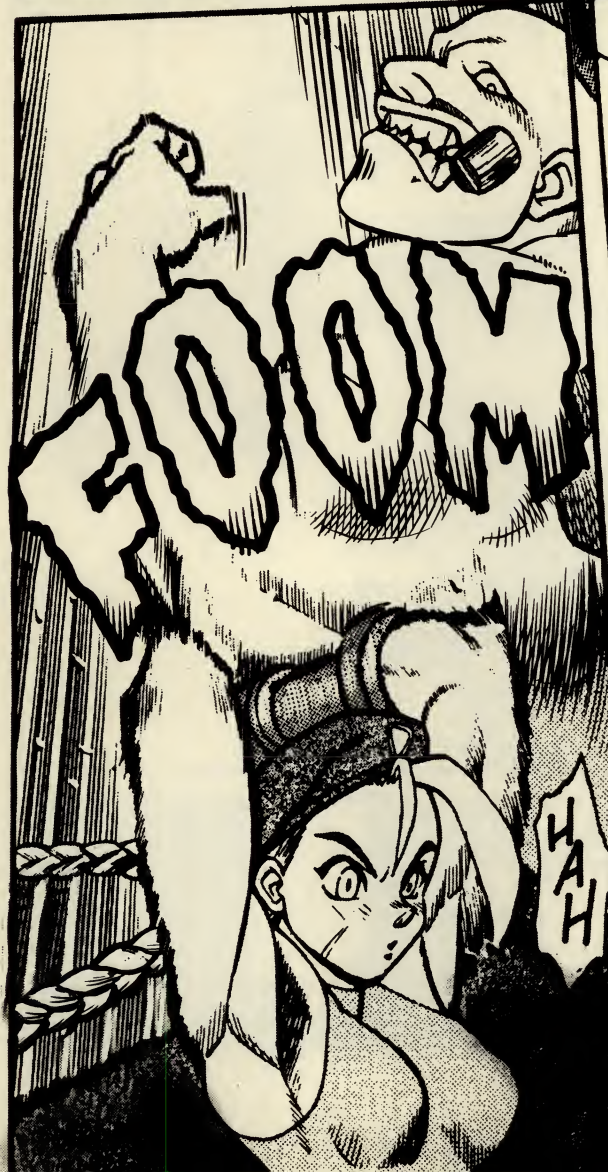
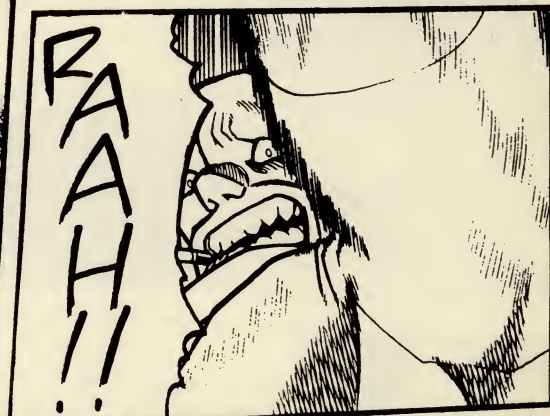
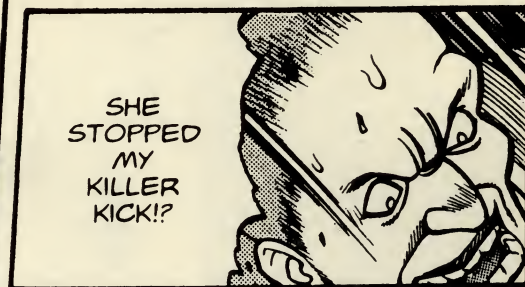
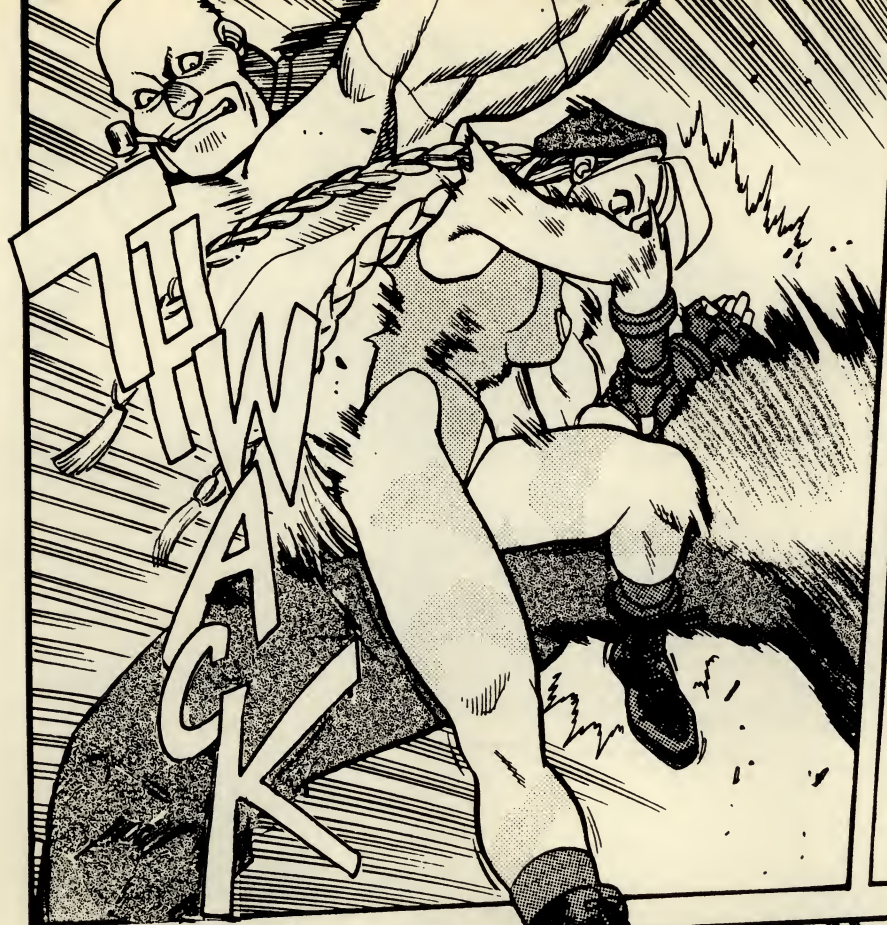
WHOOOSH

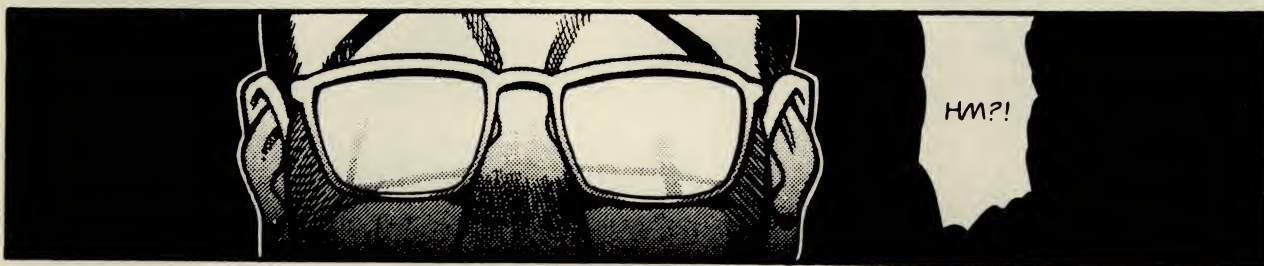
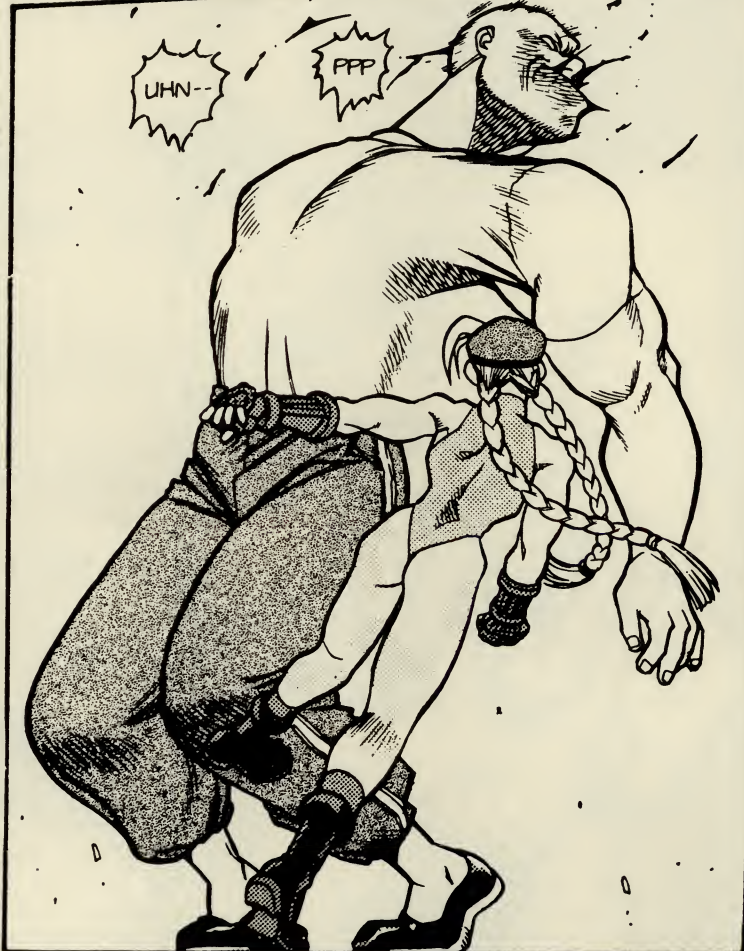
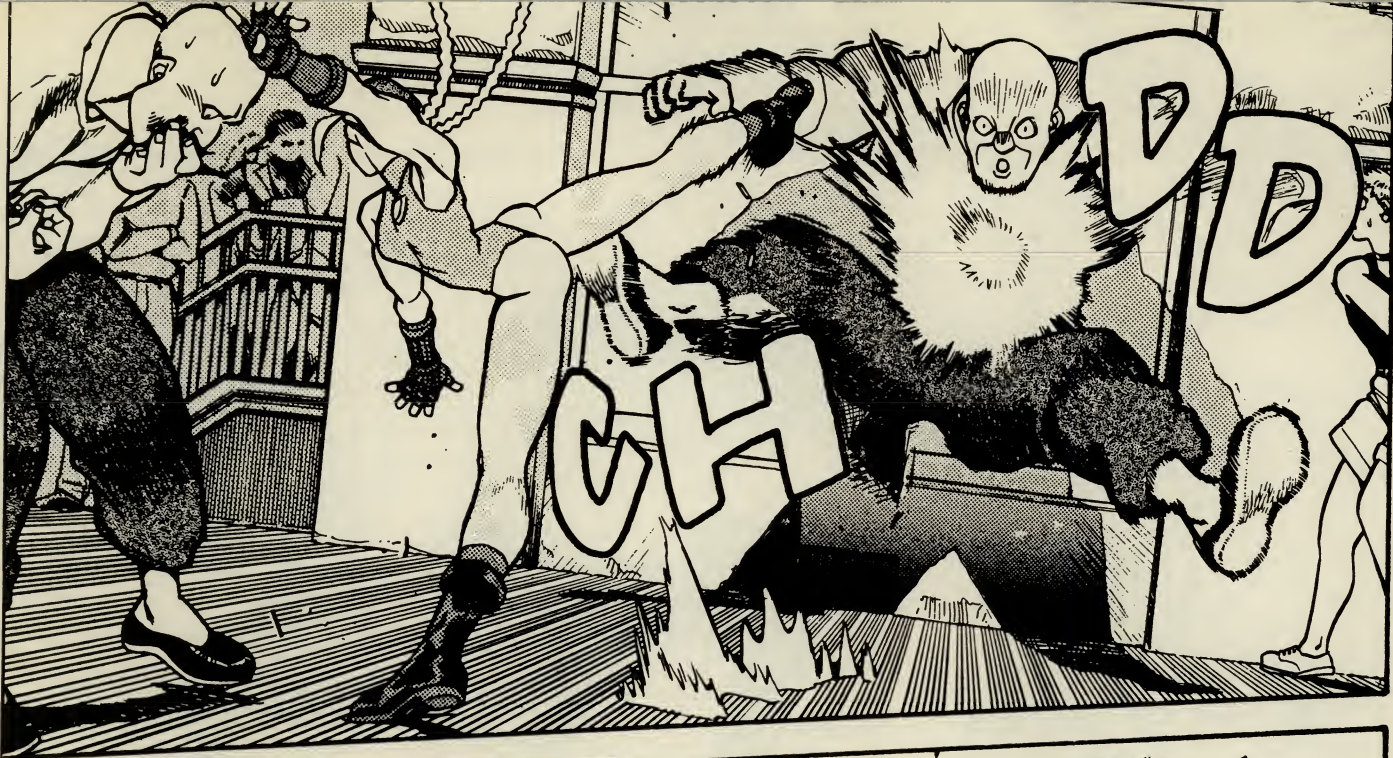


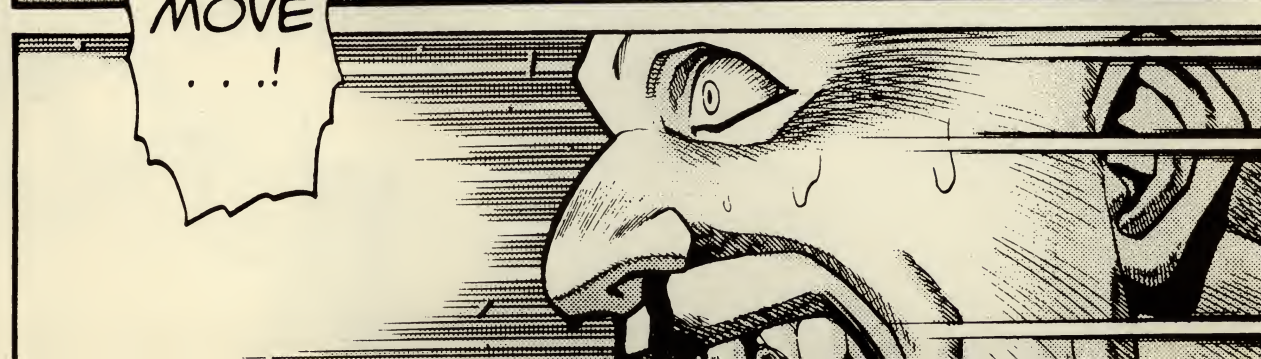
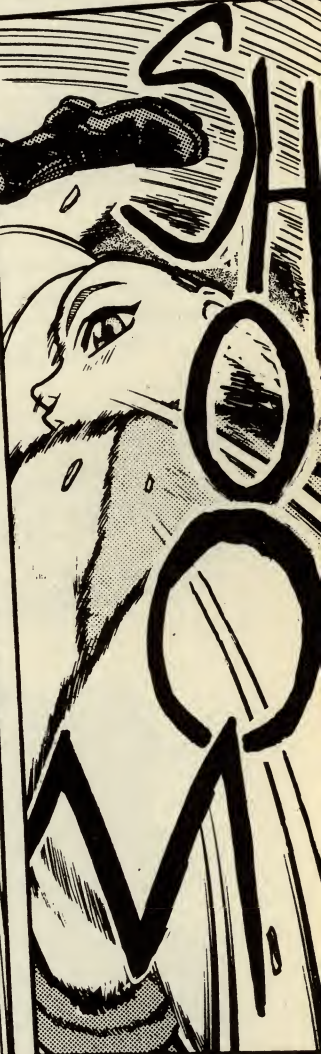
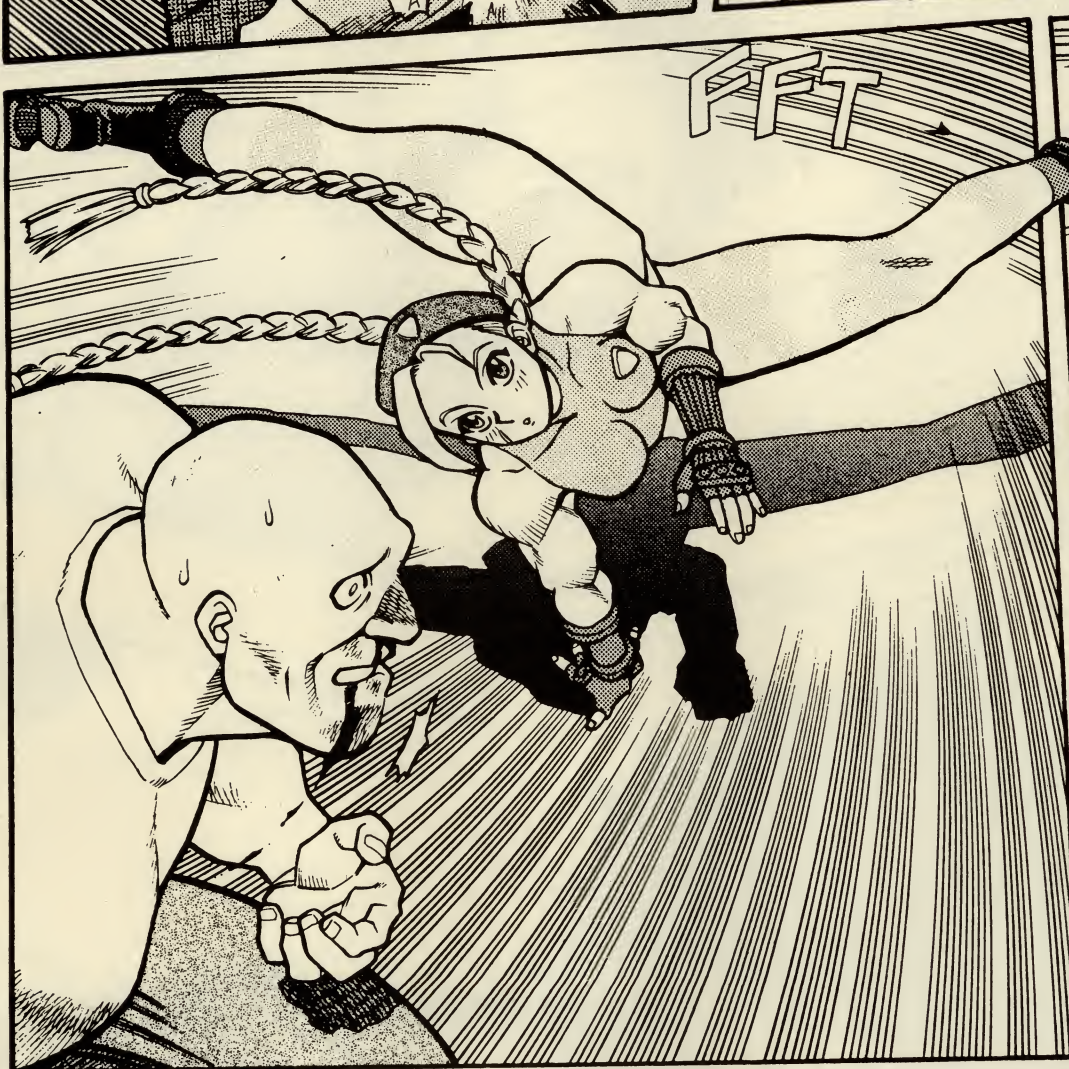
HOW'S
THIS
FOR
SPEED!?

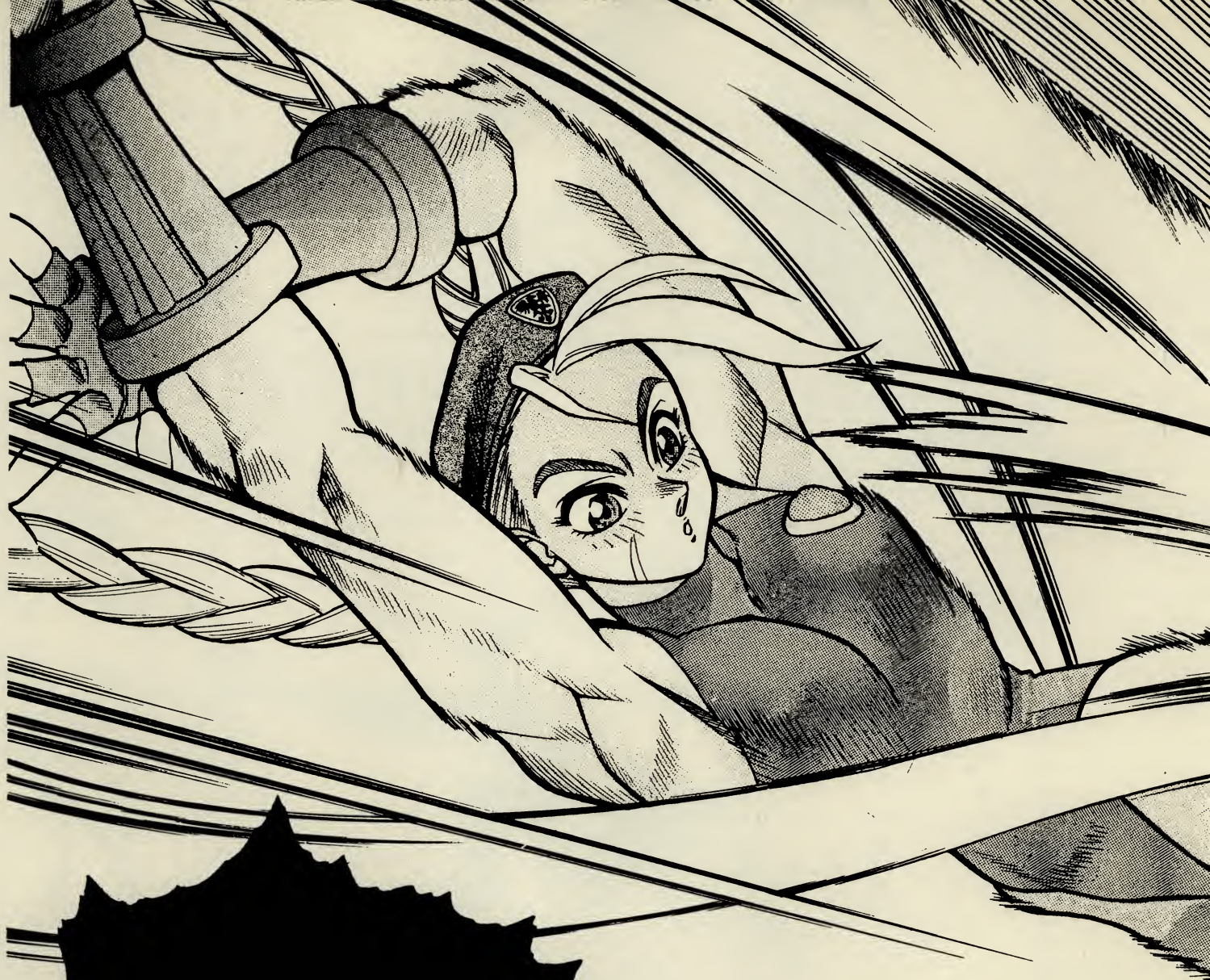
BET
YOU
CAN'T
SEE
ME!



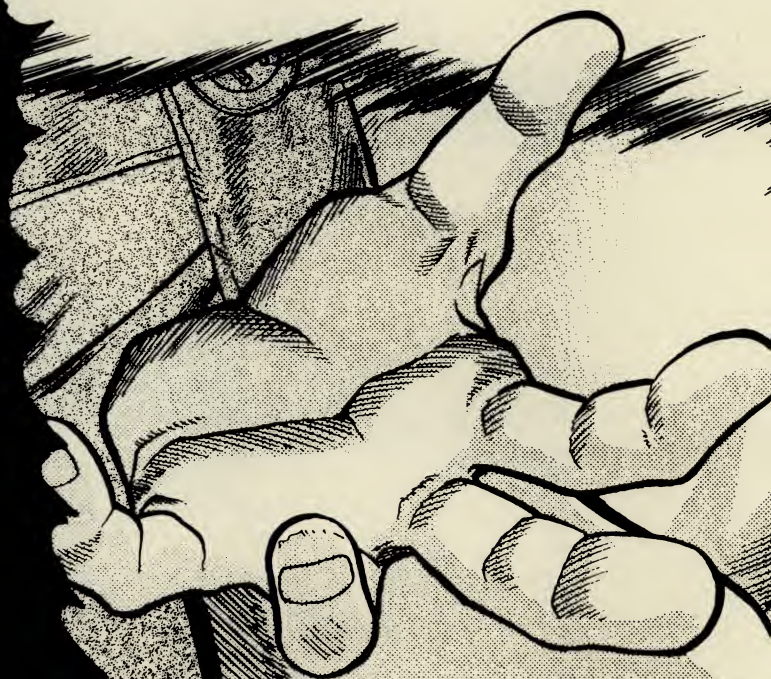








SPIRAL
ARROW!





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IN
EDO...

Story by KYOICHI NANATSUKI

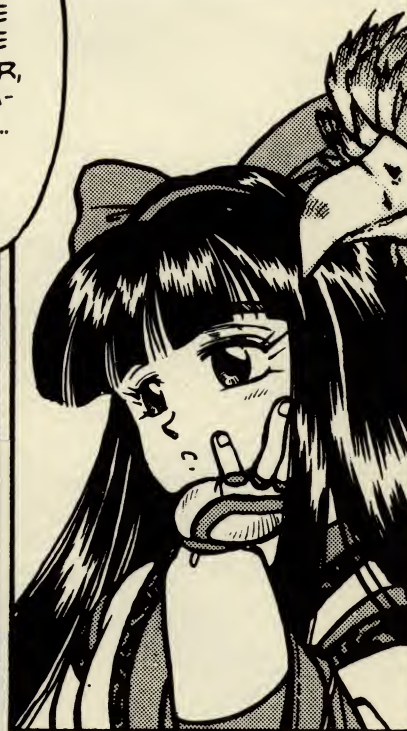
Art by YUKI MIYOSHI

English Adaptation by FRED BURKE & KAORU HOSAKA

Lettering & Touch-up by MARY KELLEHER

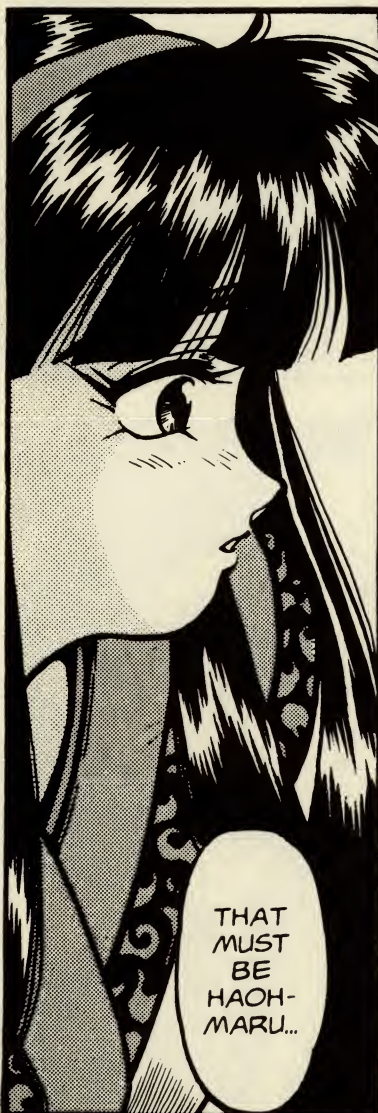
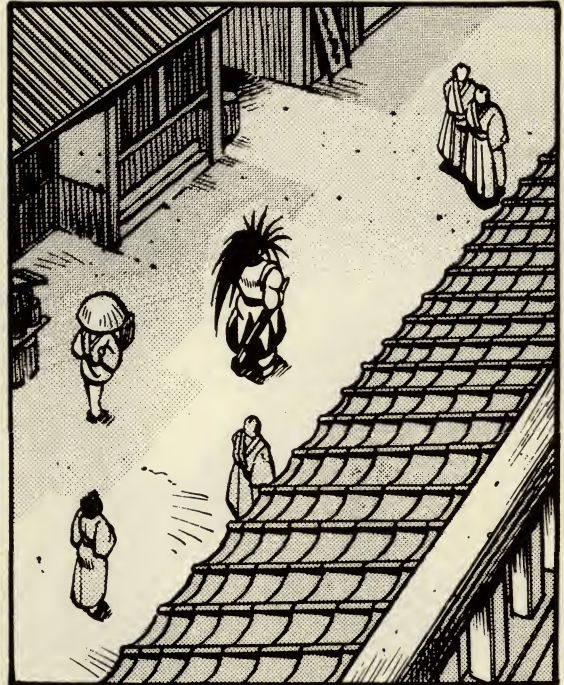
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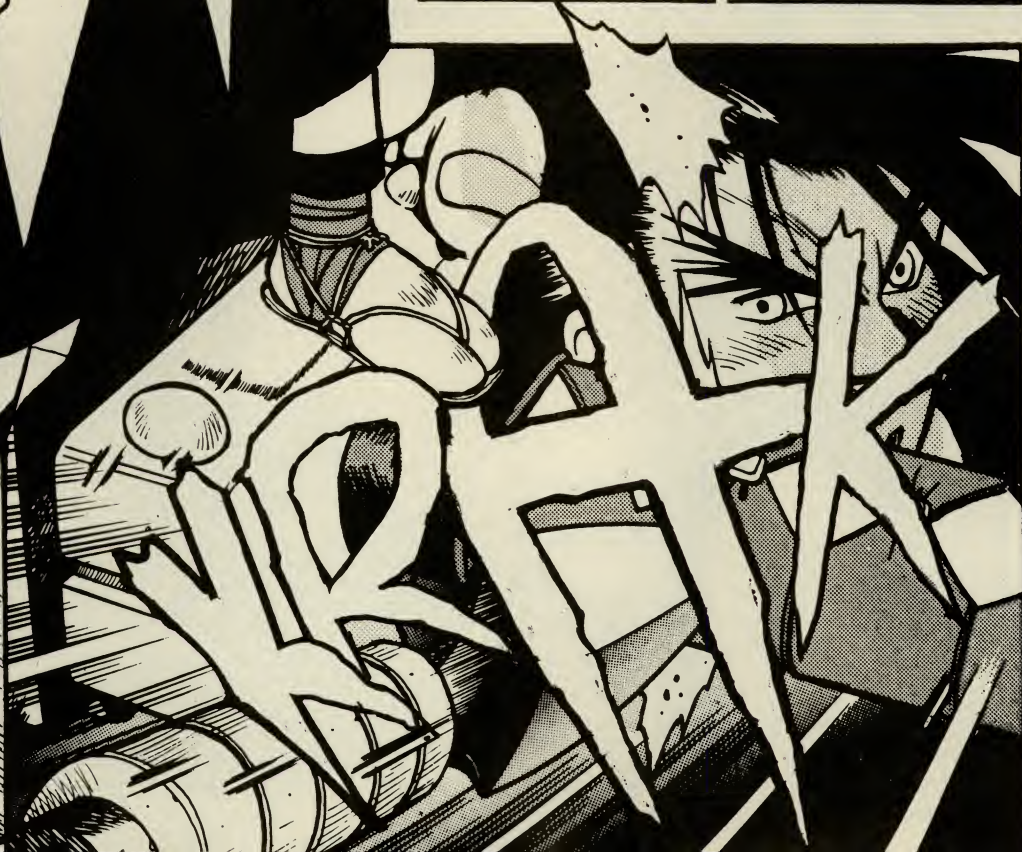
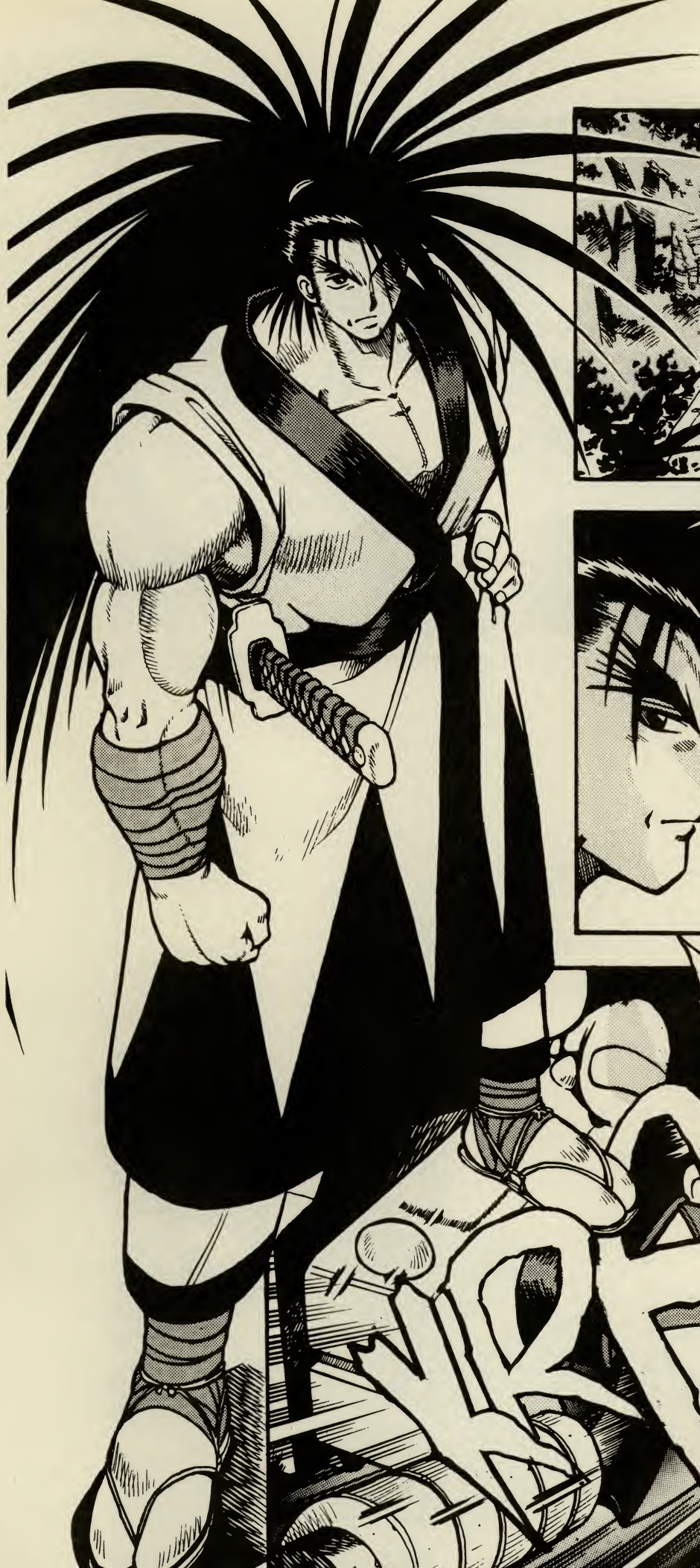
WE'VE
COME
SO FAR,
MAMA-
HAHA...





...LET'S
DESTROY
THE EVIL OF
THE DARK
KINGDOM
QUICKLY SO
WE CAN
RETURN TO
KAMUI-
KOTAN...





IT IS I,
NAGIRI
OF THE
KOGA
NINJA
SCHOOL!

LONG
TIME
NO SEE,
HAOH-
MARU.

SH
S
S
H
S
T

S
A
A

STOP,
NAGIRI!



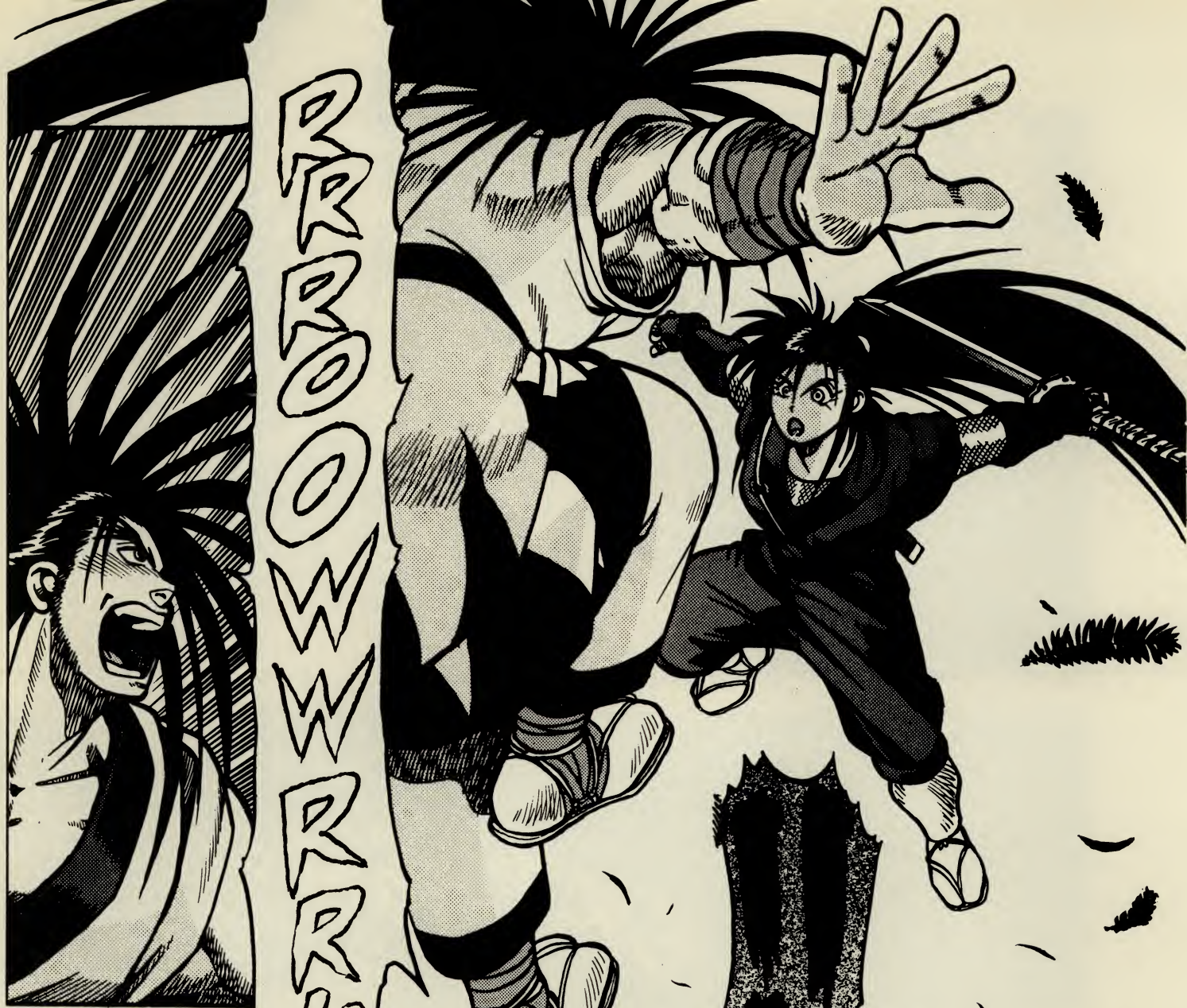
THE
BLACK-
WINGED
ENCIRCLE-
MENT!

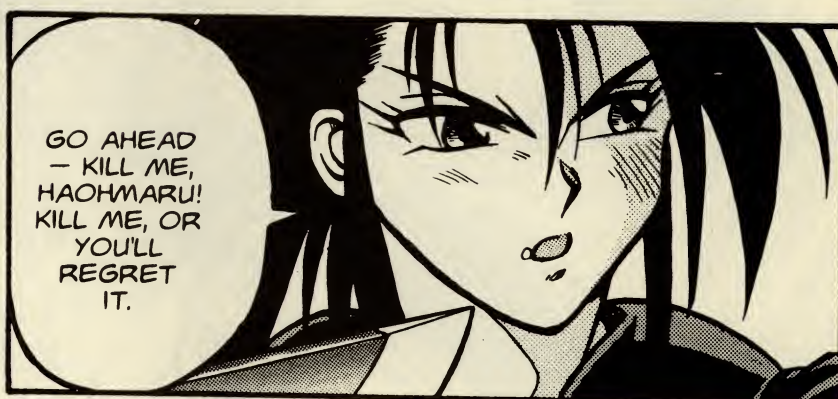
I HAVE
COME
TO
AVENGE
MY
FATHER!



UNGH!



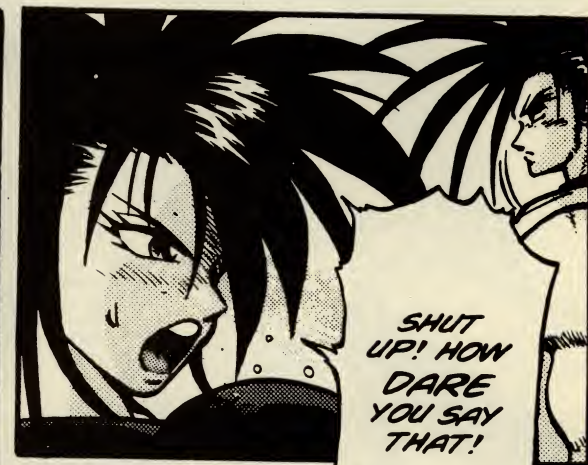




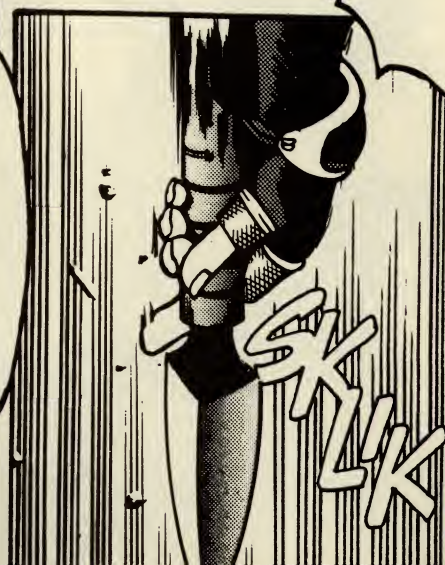
GO AHEAD
— KILL ME,
HAOHMARU!
KILL ME, OR
YOU'LL
REGRET
IT.

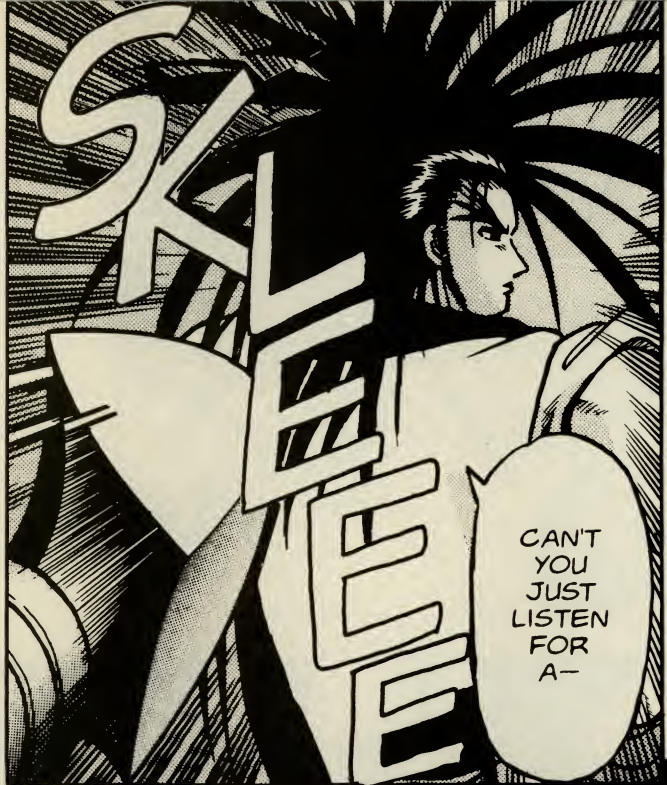


I DID NOT
KILL YOUR
FATHER.
MURYOHKEN
KOGA
WAS MY
FRIEND...



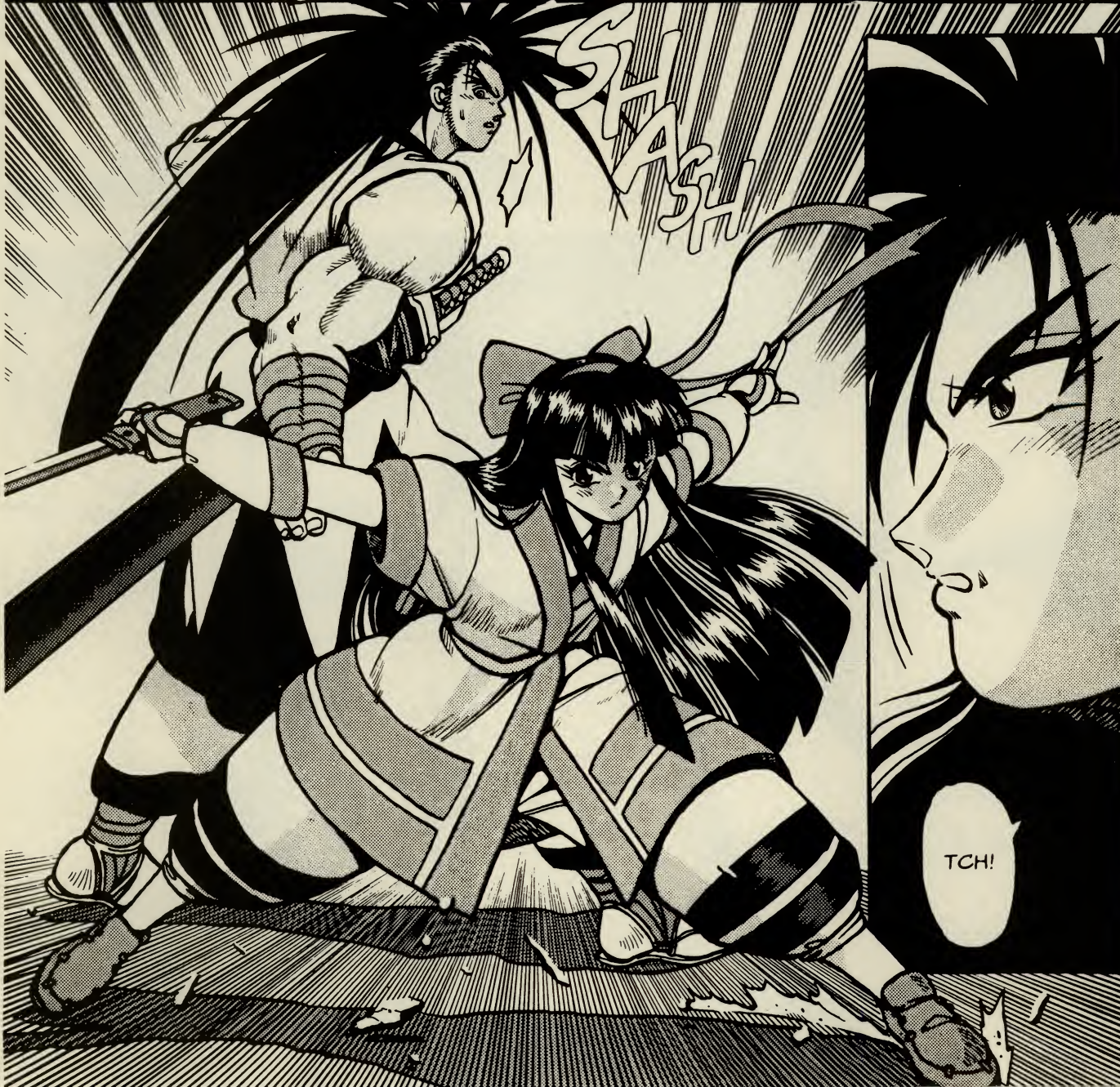
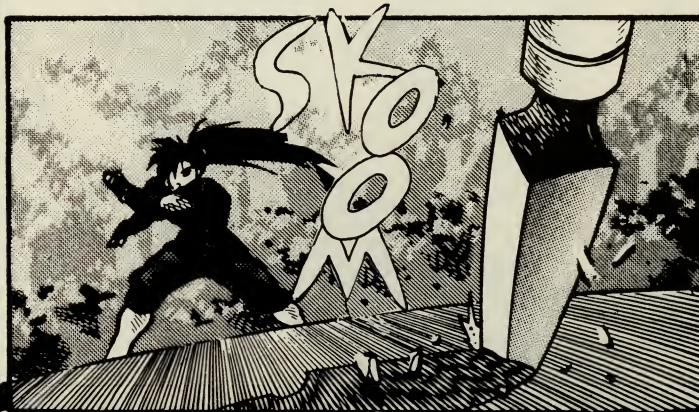
SHUT
UP! HOW
DARE
YOU SAY
THAT!



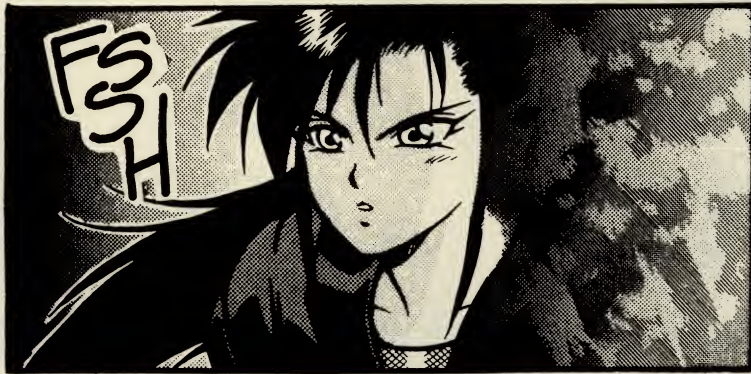
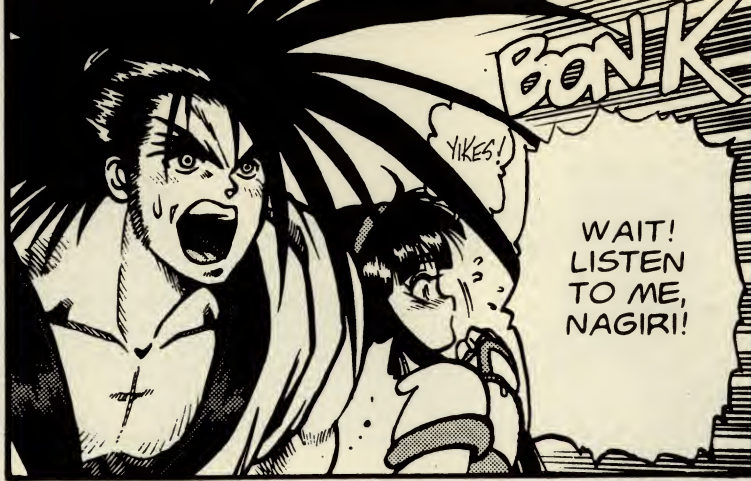


CAN'T
YOU
JUST
LISTEN
FOR
A—

KA-
KANG

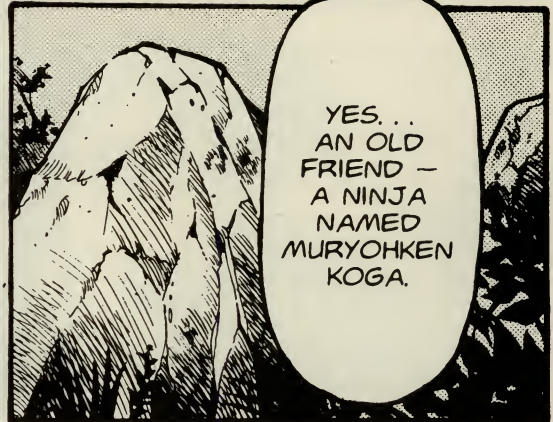
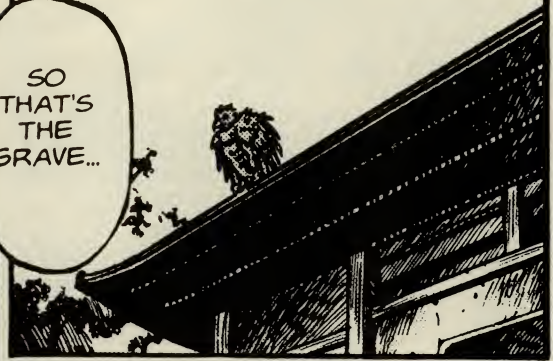


TCH!





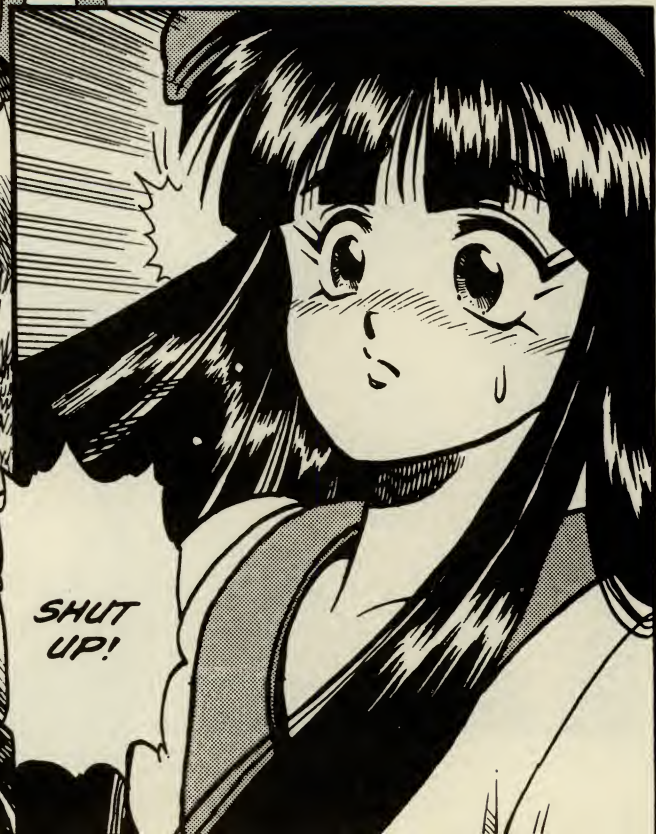
SO
THAT'S
THE
GRAVE...



YES...
AN OLD
FRIEND -
A NINJA
NAMED
MURYOHKEN
KOGA.



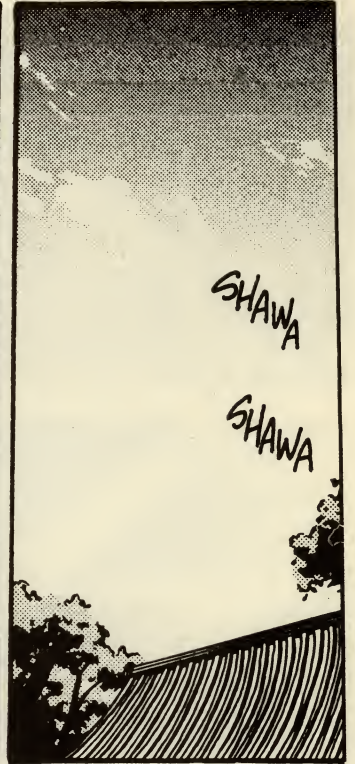
SO,
LIKE...
WAS HE
THAT
WOMAN'S
FATHER...



SHUT
UP!



Fwip

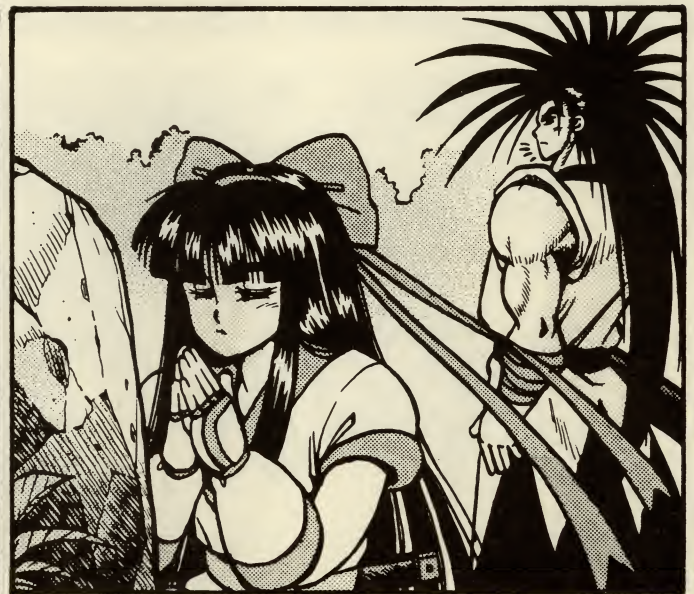


SHAWA

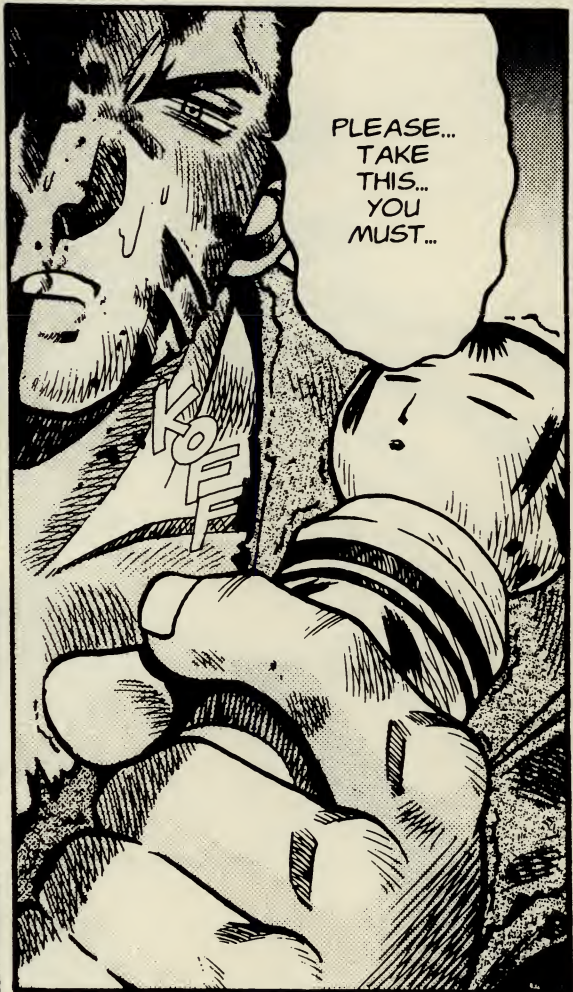
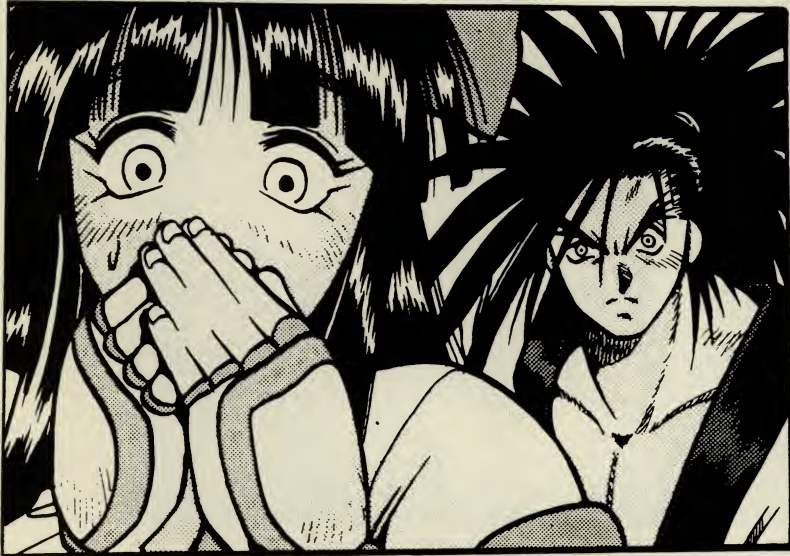
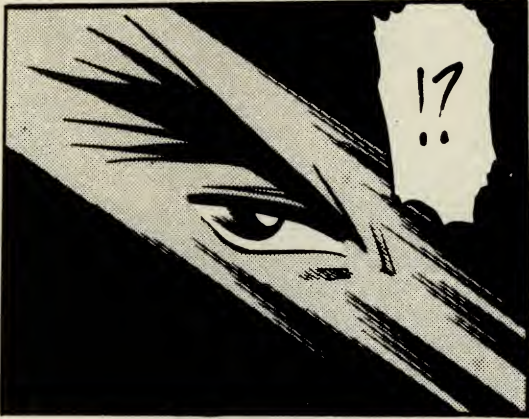
SHAWA

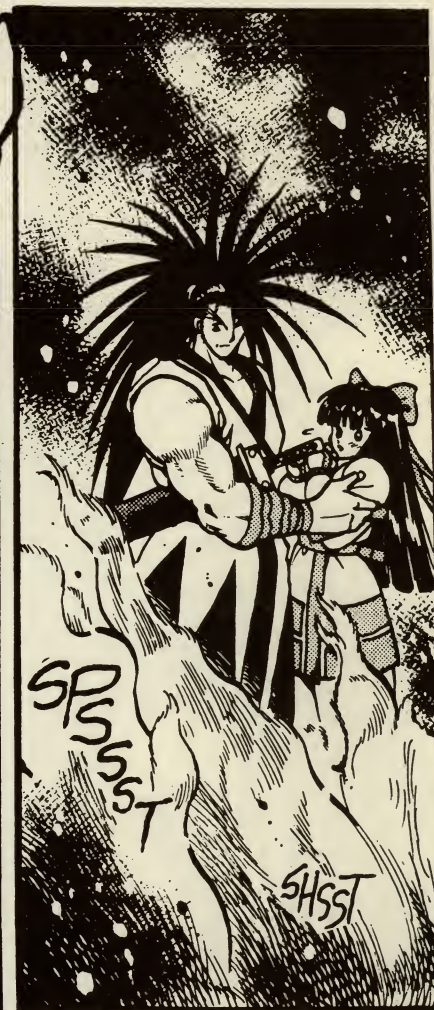


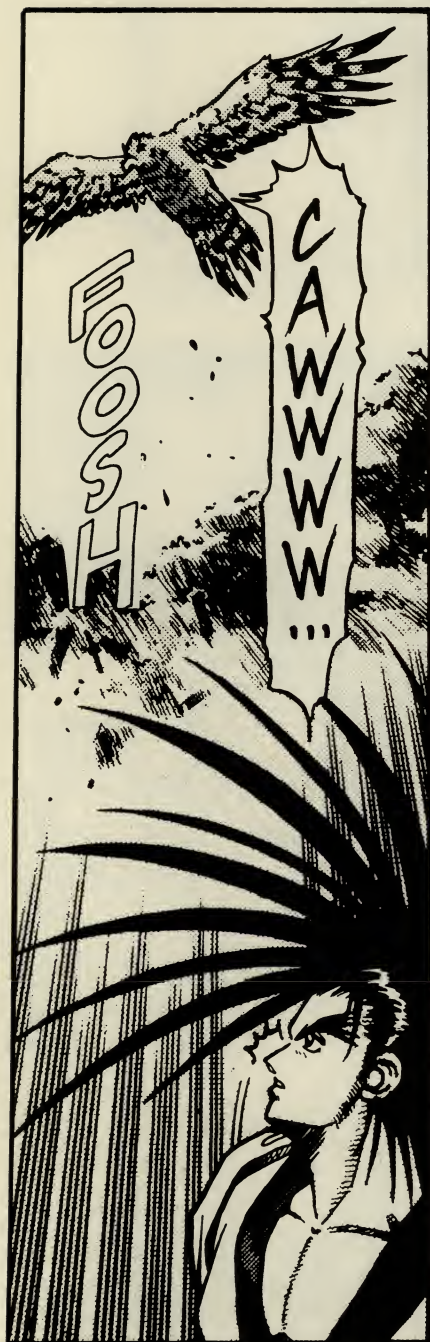
SORRY—
THAT WAS
RUDE. BUT
NAGIRI
IS *MY*
PROBLEM...



KAK





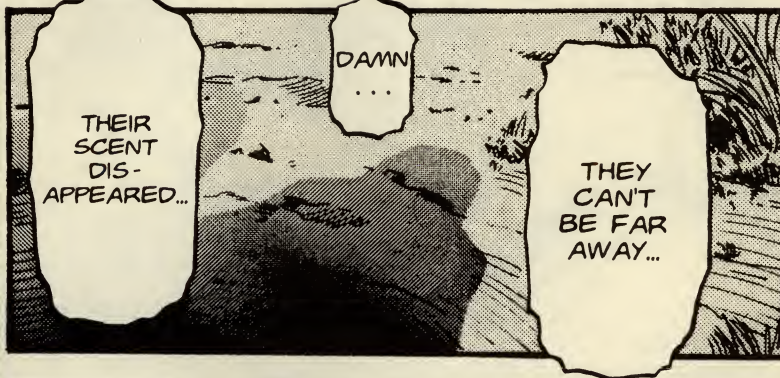




ARE
THEY
STILL
AFTER
US?



FOUR...
FIVE... NO,
THERE ARE
MORE!
THEY'RE
KEEPING A
CONSISTENT
DISTANCE
FROM US.



THEIR
SCENT
DIS-
APPEARED...

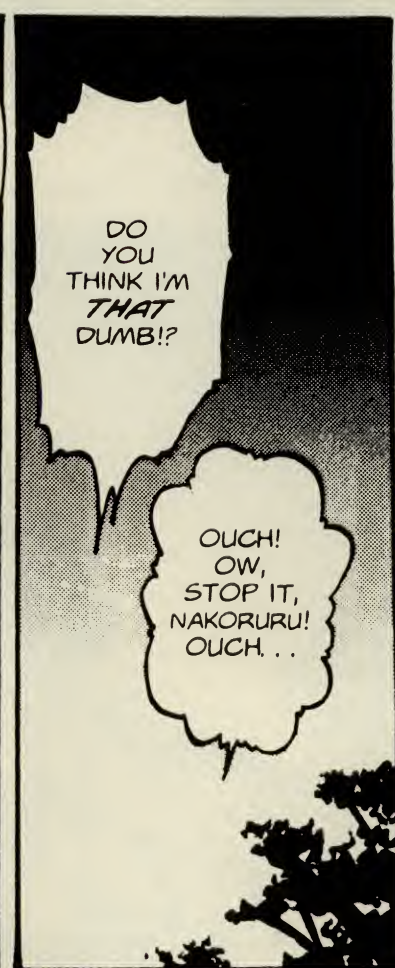
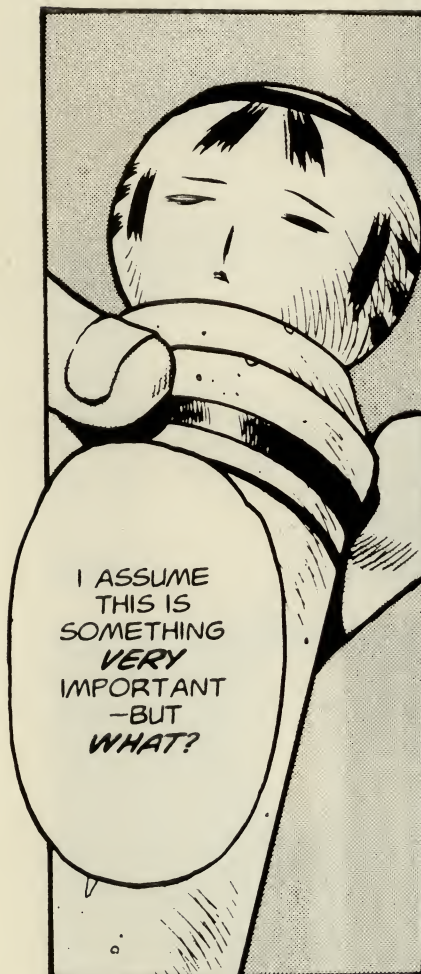
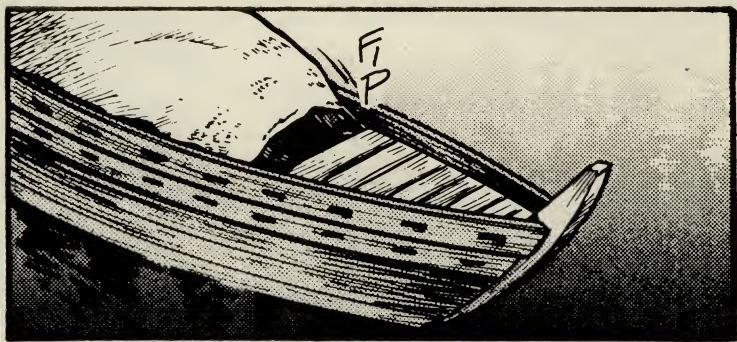
DAMN
...

THEY
CAN'T
BE FAR
AWAY...



IT'LL
BE NIGHT
SOON.
LET'S GET
MORE OF
US.

YESSIR
!

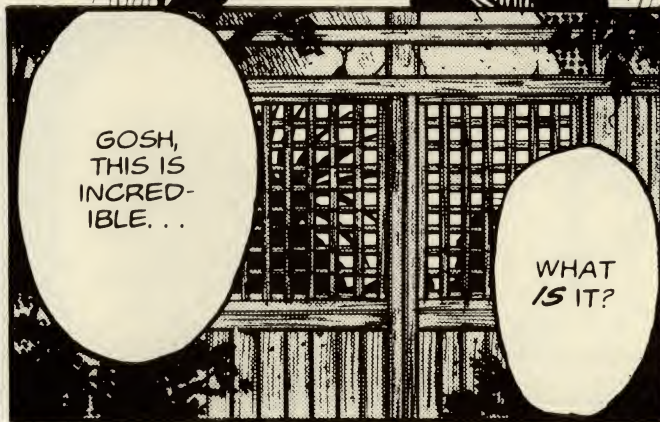
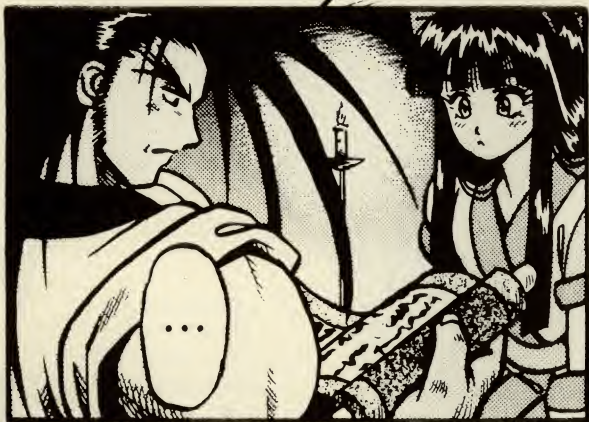
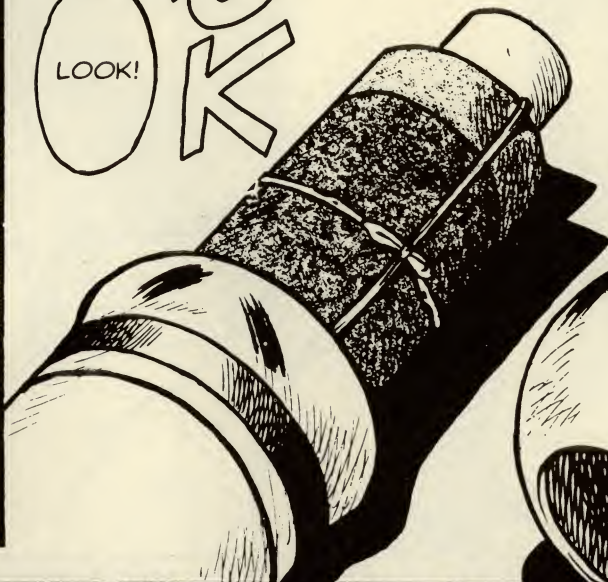




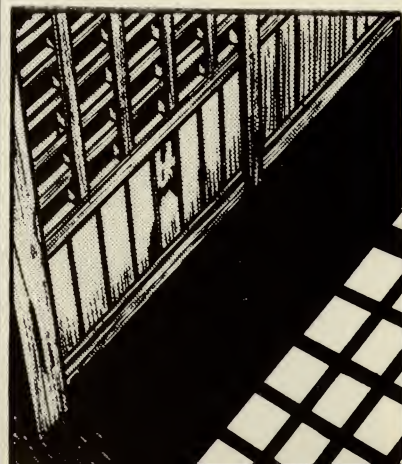
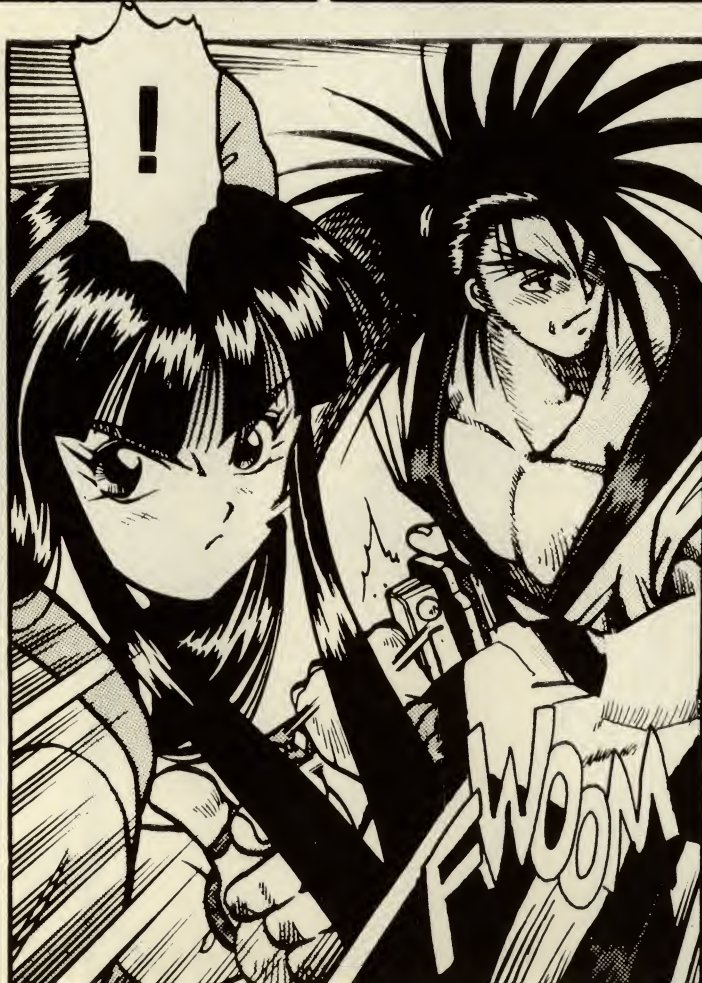
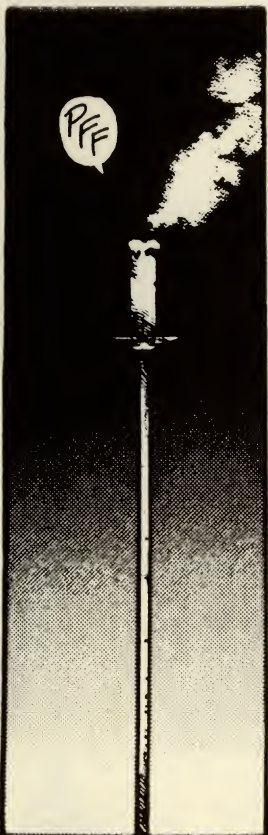
LOOK!

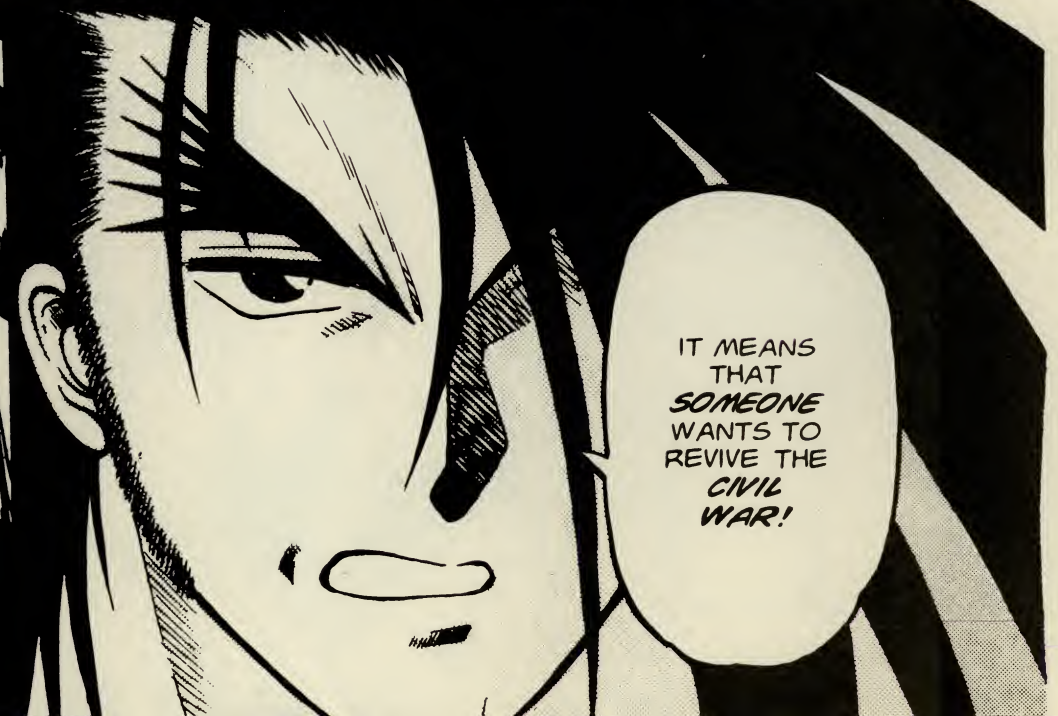
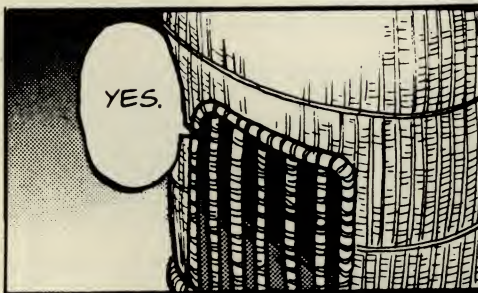
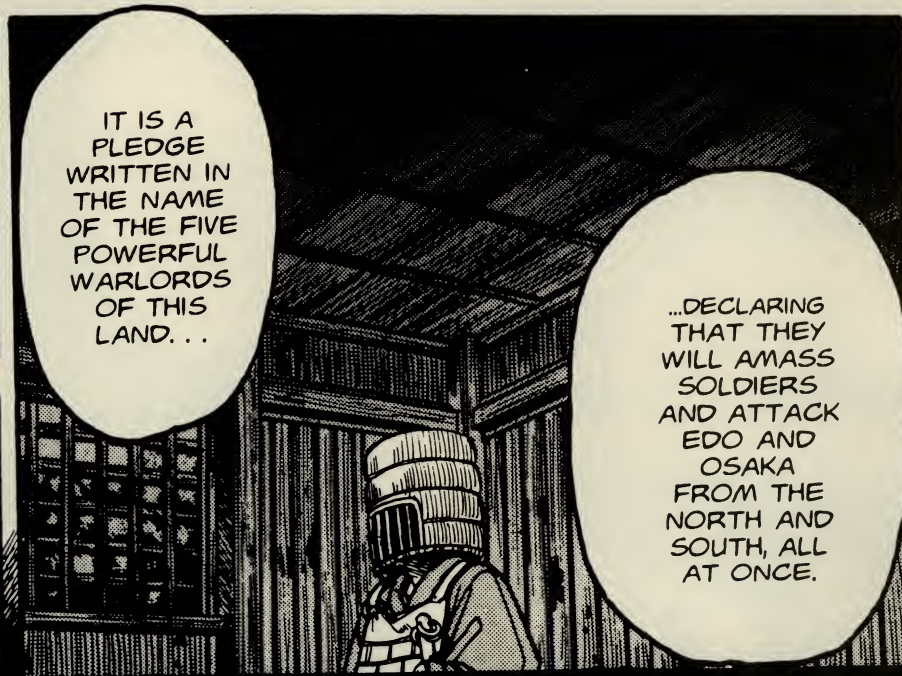
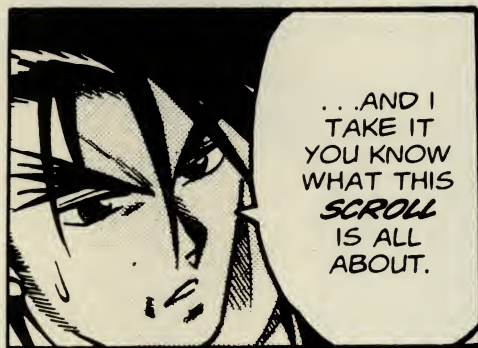
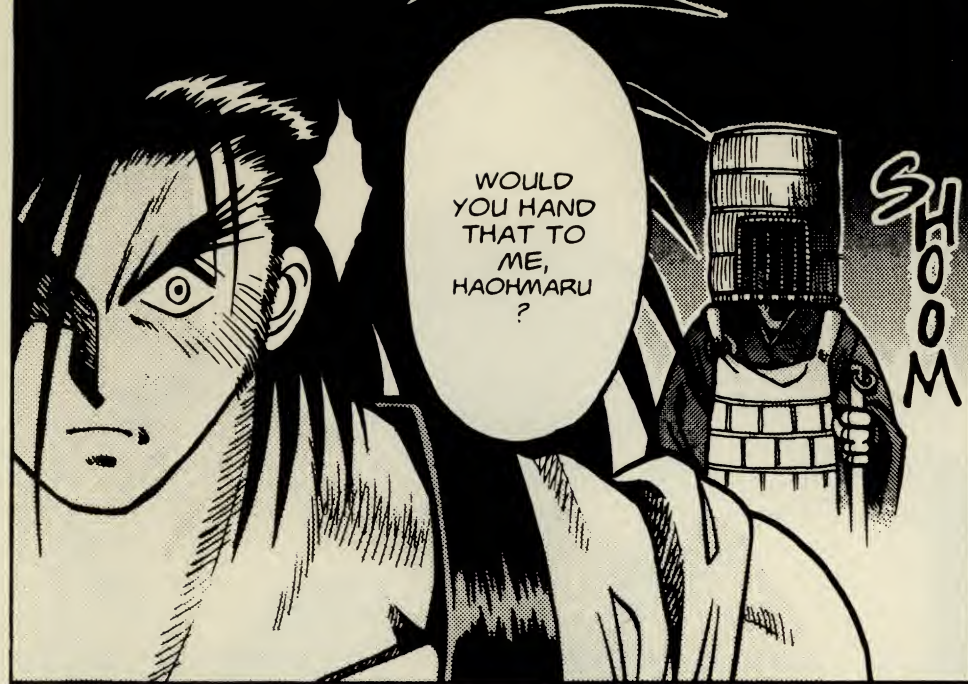
TO K

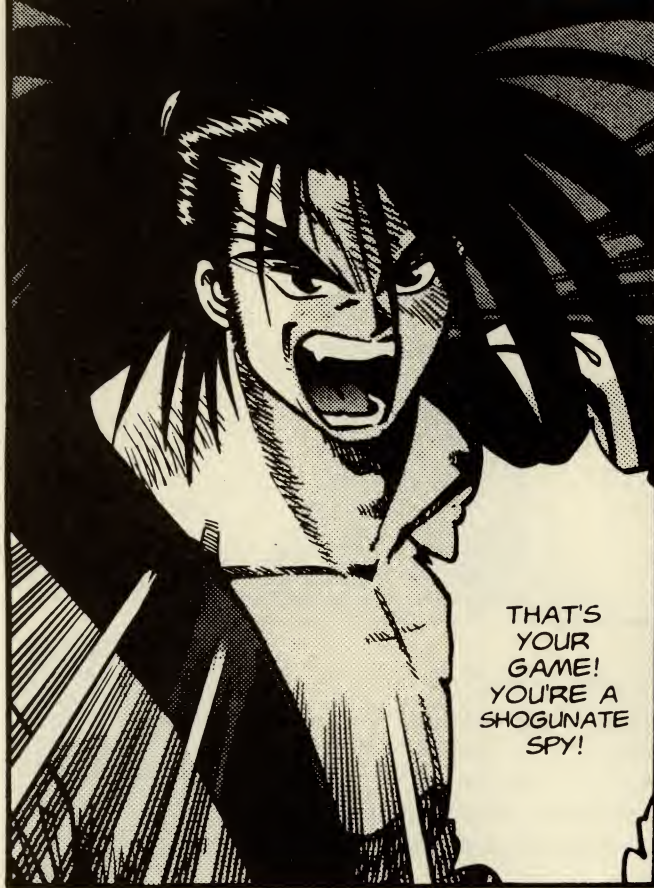
A
SCROLL
...?



WHAT
IS IT?



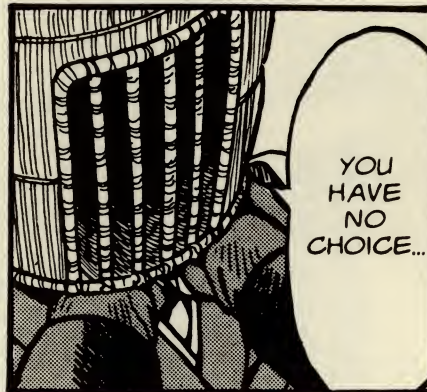




WE HAVE
BEEN
COMMANDED
BY THE
ELDERS IN
THE
GOVERNMENT
TO
PREVENT
THIS
CONSPIRACY—

HOW
CAN
WE
TRUST
YOU!?

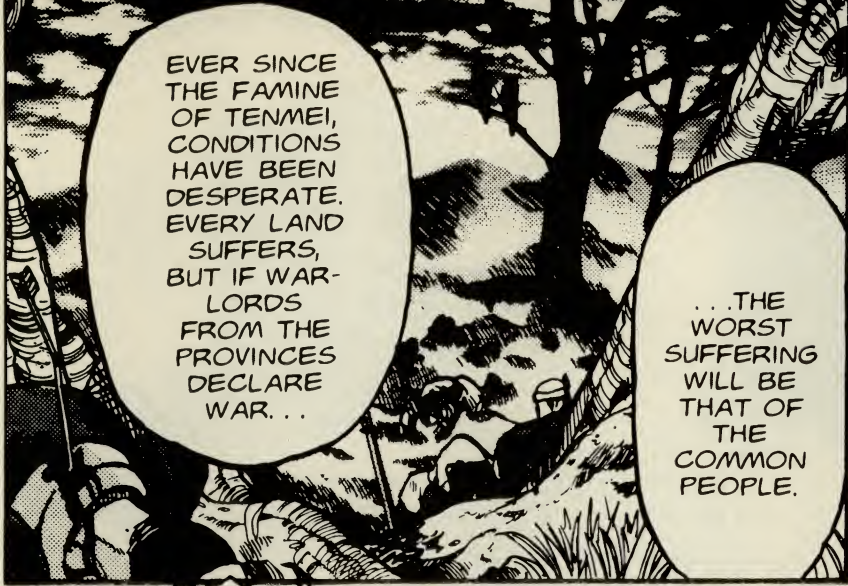
THAT'S
YOUR
GAME!
YOU'RE A
SHOGUNATE
SPY!



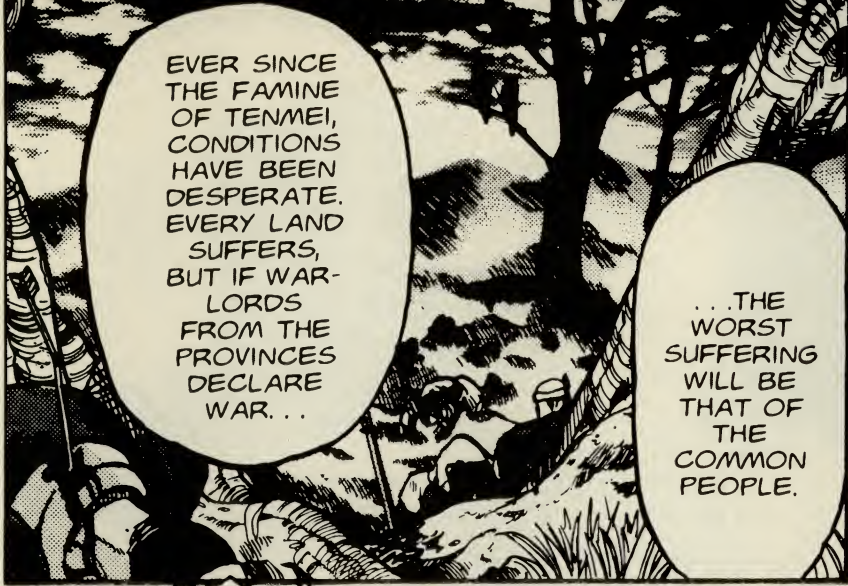
YOU
HAVE
NO
CHOICE...



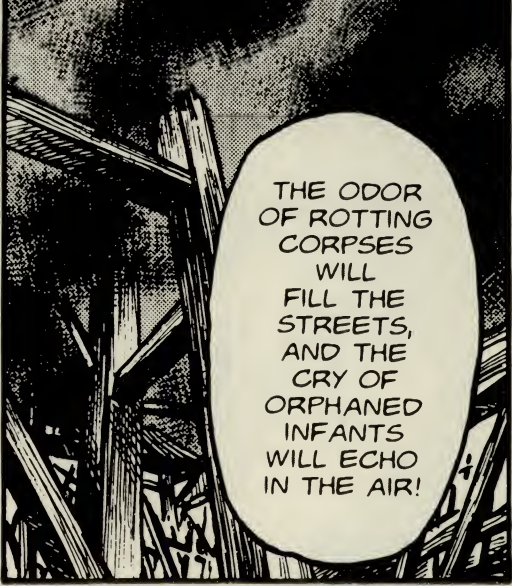
...FOR
I AM
**HANZO
HATTORI**
OF THE
IGA
NINJA
SCHOOL.




EVER SINCE
THE FAMINE
OF TENMEI,
CONDITIONS
HAVE BEEN
DESPERATE.
EVERY LAND
SUFFERS,
BUT IF WAR-
LORDS
FROM THE
PROVINCES
DECLARE
WAR...



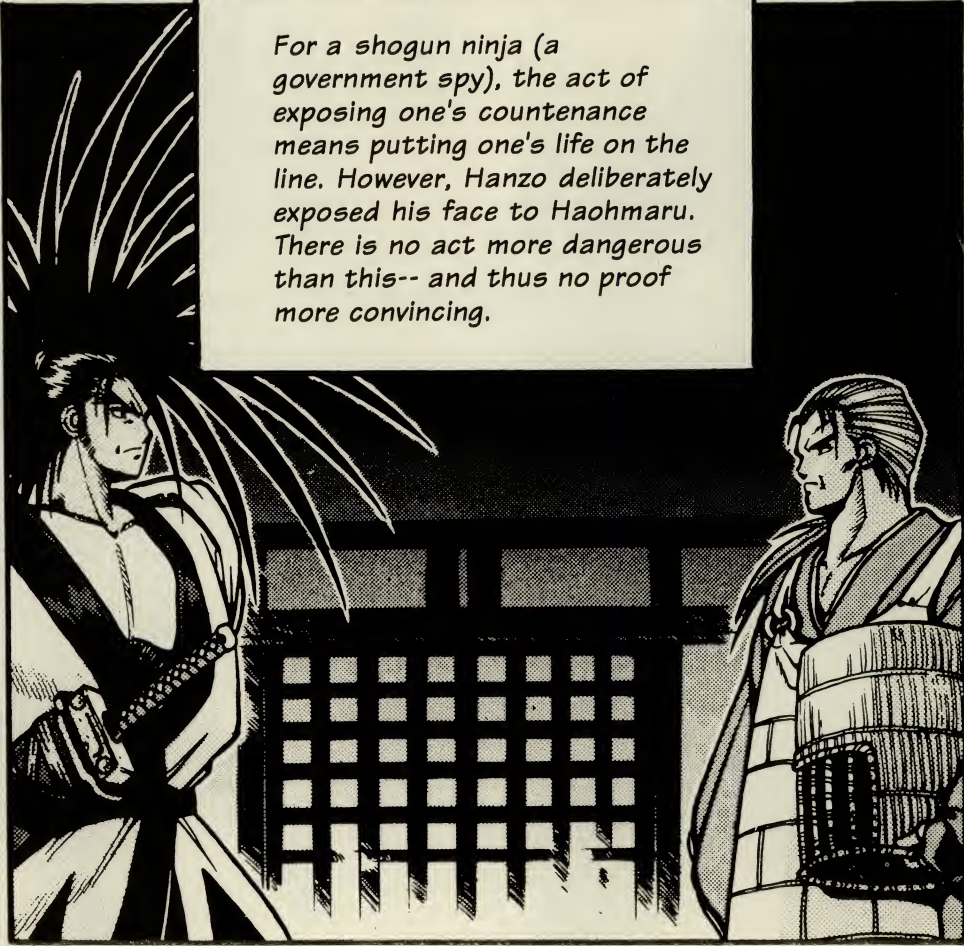
...THE
WORST
SUFFERING
WILL BE
THAT OF
THE
COMMON
PEOPLE.



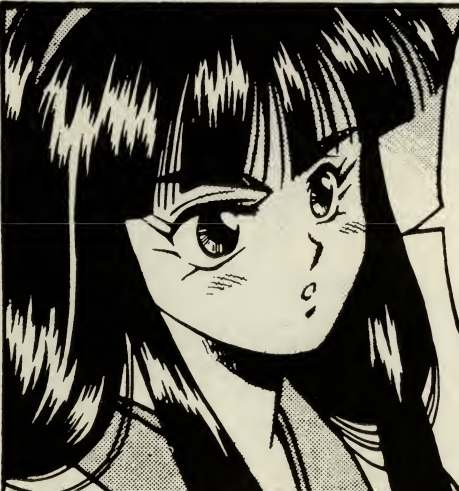
THE ODOR
OF ROTTING
CORPSES
WILL
FILL THE
STREETS,
AND THE
CRY OF
ORPHANED
INFANTS
WILL ECHO
IN THE AIR!



IF WAR
WERE TO
BREAK OUT
NOW, THIS
STATE
WOULD
DEFINITELY
DESTROY
ITSELF!



For a shogun ninja (a
government spy), the act of
exposing one's countenance
means putting one's life on the
line. However, Hanzo deliberately
exposed his face to Haohmaru.
There is no act more dangerous
than this-- and thus no proof
more convincing.



HAOHMARU,
HE'S NOT
LYING
TO US.
I CAN
SEE IT.



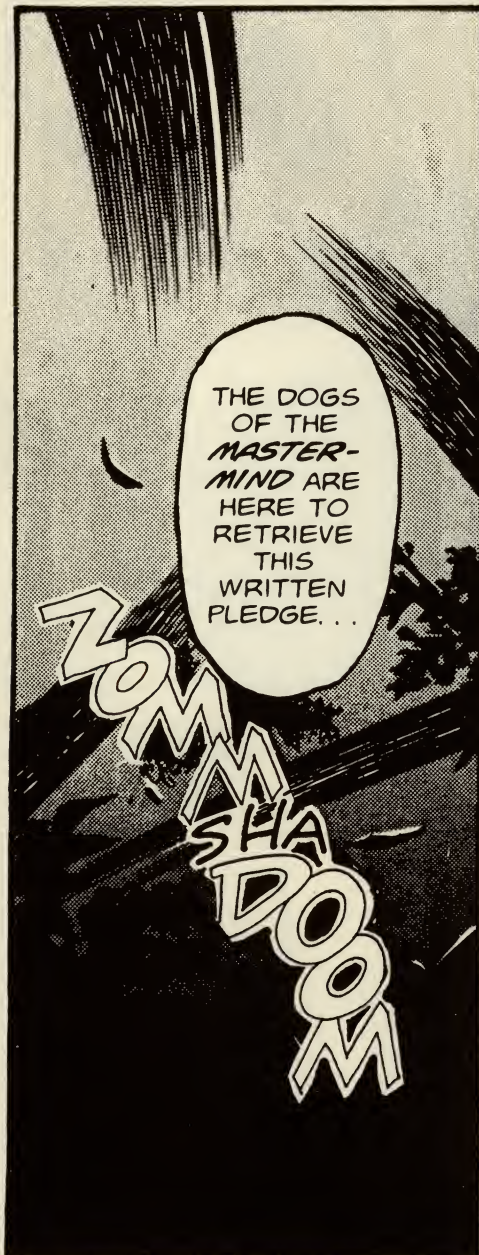
YEAH...



LOOKS
LIKE
WE'RE
SURROUNDED
...



WHAT
...?!



THE DOGS
OF THE
*MASTER-
MIND* ARE
HERE TO
RETRIEVE
THIS
WRITTEN
PLEDGE...

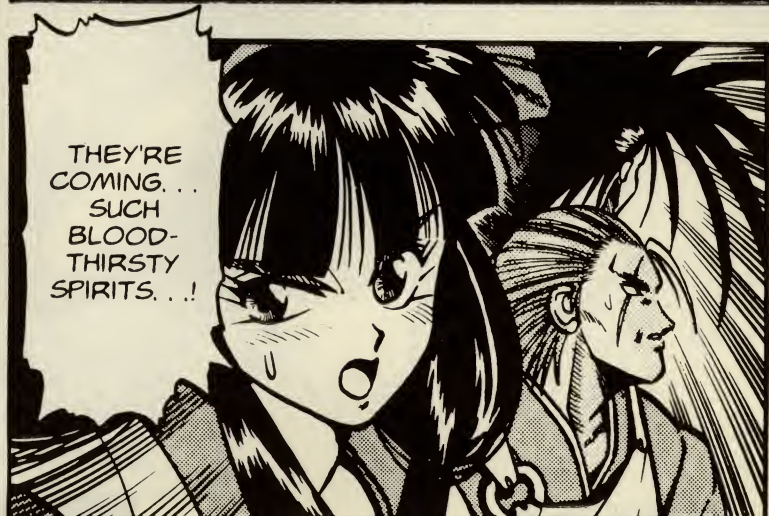


KILL
THEM
ALL!

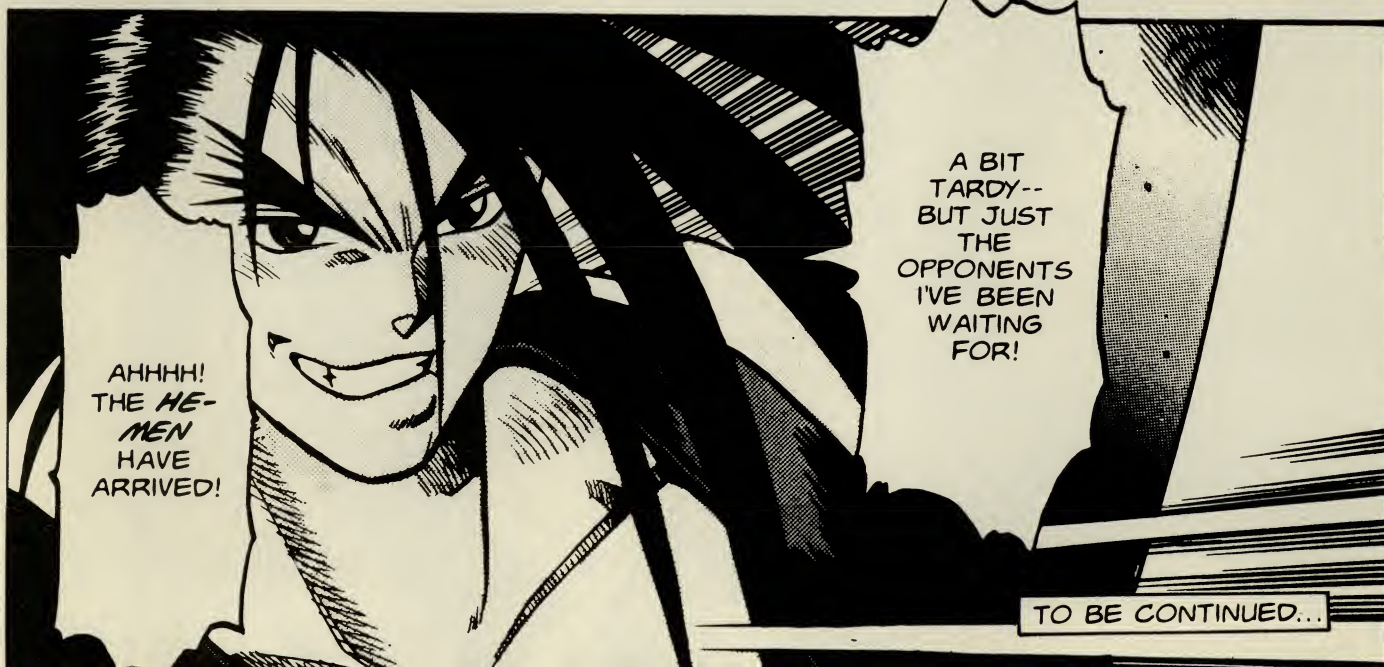
The
scroll —
snatch
it!



KILL
THEM!



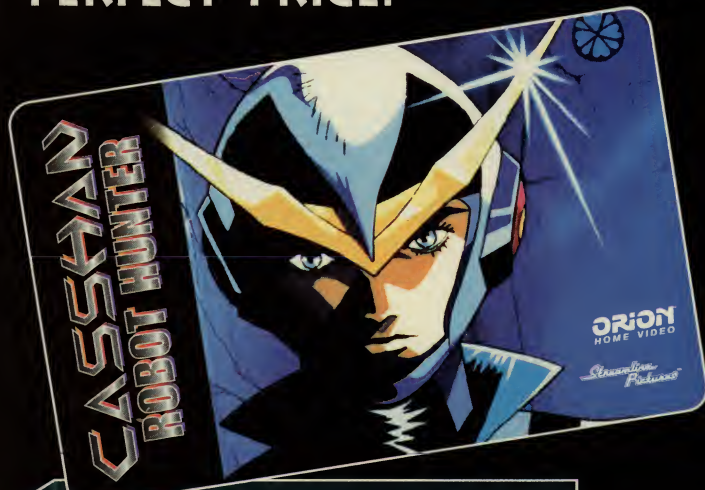
THEY'RE
COMING...
SUCH
BLOOD-
THIRSTY
SPIRITS...!



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IN A ROOM OF ITS OWN



Resident Evil

System: Sony PlayStation
Developer: Capcom
Publisher: Capcom
Availability: Now (U.S.)

Resident Evil is a third person action/puzzle game similar to *Alone in the Dark*, with 3D polygon characters in a stunningly realistic environment. **Resident Evil** is in a class of its own when it comes to video game gore: zombies that chomp on you, monsters that can take your head clean off, and blood, blood, blood.

You may choose one of two characters, Jill Valentine or Chris Redfield. The story and difficulty of the game is different for the two. Jill can hold more items than Chris, and can also pick some locks and get into places easier. There are quite a few weapons to be found (shotgun, magnum pistol, bazooka...) and tons of baddies to kill (zombies, rabid dogs, giant spiders...). The save feature is also unlike most games. First you must find ink ribbons for a typewriter, then you find out where the typewriters are, and then you can save.

Resident Evil is easily the best game I have played in a long time; the graphics and constantly changing views give it the feel and look of a movie. The different music for different events is cool: somber eerie music for the usual part of the game and deluxe terror music when you deal with some bigger than life monster. The detail is what hooks you: the sound of a zombie dragging one foot, the sound

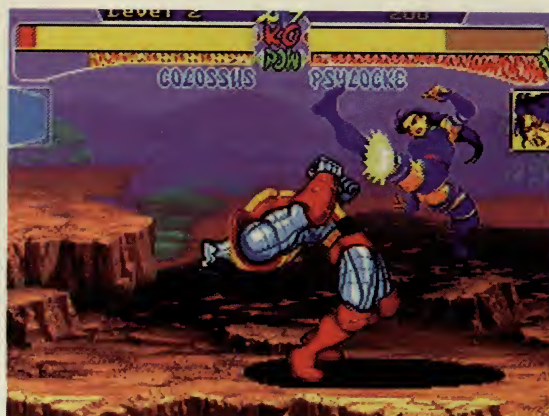
of crickets when you go outside, or the ability to interact with almost everything around you. The game play is pretty good, although some times you try to run and get a clean shot off and the view changes so that you can't see what you're trying to shoot at. The end is so cool I won't ruin it for you, but when you think you've beaten the game think again, and then when you've beaten the game they give you a "special" reason to do it again!

Ryan MacDonald



The Last Word: Overall, the perfect balance between action and problem solving. The puzzles are logical but not easy, and the action is just right. Everyone involved with the production of this game should take a bow.

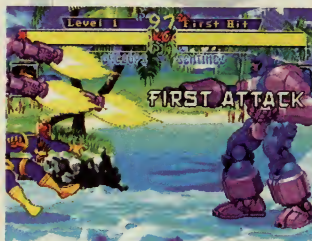
NOT A BOMB



X-Men: Children of the Atom

System: Sega Saturn
Developer: Capcom
Publisher: Capcom (Japan); Acclaim (U.S.)
Availability: Now

I know some of you are thinking, "Oh great, just what I need. Yet another crummy *SFII* clone." And yes, **X-Men** is just another clone, but it has a lot going for it.



First, it's got a very identifiable and diverse cast (what person hasn't at least *heard* about the X-Men?). There are ten selectable characters (eleven if you count the hidden character Akuma...how'd he get there?) ranging from everyone's favorite Wolverine, to quick and rather cheap Psylocke, to the ominous Sentinel. Each character has her own special ability (double jumping, bouncing off walls, etc.) plus a super attack that can hit an opponent sometimes 15+ times! The character animation itself is close to arcade perfect. As far as sound, the music is tolerable—kind of *Mega Man*-ish—and the slashes, crashes, and whatnot sound appropriate.

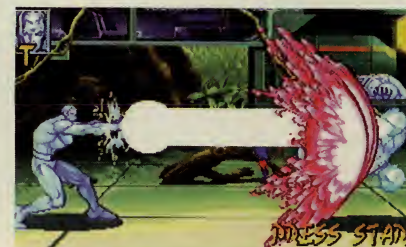
Probably the game's biggest nuance is "super jumping," which allows you to leap two full screen heights into the air, making it possible to do more

combos, hit even more times, and inflict even more damage. Another major (though not groundbreaking) add-on is the Mutant Power Meter that fills up as you fight.

Now for all of you gamers who complain about games being too easy, don't worry. **X-Men** is the most difficult 2D fighter I've ever played. Maybe it was just me, but as I progressed through the game, it appeared that my opponents got increasingly cheap and annoying, and I won't even begin to talk about Magneto (who makes M. Bison look like Diddy Kong).

When compared to the likes of *Street Fighter Alpha*, **X-Men**'s flaws are more visible (the loading time is a bit longer than other games, and some of the voices could've sounded better). If you're a total **X-Men** fan, I'm sure you'll get this no matter what—and I don't blame you because it's tons o' fun—but if you want a solid game, you might want to save your money for *Alpha*.

Kit Fox



The Last Word: As far as 2D fighters go, **X-Men** is high up on the list, but isn't number one. If you're looking to be really challenged, this game won't disappoint you.

MECHA ENFORCERS



Horned Owl

System: Sony PlayStation
Developer: Konami
Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment
Availability: Now (Japan); September/October (U.S.)

Sony has done it again! **Horned Owl** is definitely worth close scrutiny for both gun game fans and Masamune Shirow fans alike.

Horned Owl is a shooting game based on the work of Masamune Shirow (**Appleseed**) in which you must destroy enemy mecha and battle suits. **Horned Owl** has a vague resemblance to **Lethal Enforcers**, with a twist. The game moves along the X, Y, and Z axis, as opposed to just the X. It is an anime-based game, but the gameplay is the same; just point and shoot.

The graphics are very well done, particularly in the animation sequences. During gameplay, however, the graphics suffer a little, as objects become vague and the many colors that were used seem to blend into each other.

If you're looking for death incarnate get-shot-at-before-you-can-see-what's-shooting-you action, I didn't find it. I did find that a lot of things blow up if you shoot them. The game is not boring. It will keep you on your toes, it just won't shoot them off.

The game itself is unique as it comes with its own light gun. The gun, however, was designed with someone else's hands in mind. The start button, located on the side of the gun, was impossible to reach unless you moved your whole hand around the grip. The grenade launcher button,



located on the back, suffered from a similar problem. If it were about an inch higher, it would have been fine.

Another personal drawback was not knowing enough Japanese, but this is only limited to the story as the game instructions and verbal commands (such as a reminder to reload your gun) are all in English.

This is a game for those looking for a little more depth than your average shooting game, but you'd better have nimble fingers.

David Mills



The Last Word: **Horned Owl** didn't "wow" me completely, but I was impressed with its crisp animation, Masamune Shirow storyline, and gun. Although the gun design and the language barrier provide minor drawbacks, not knowing Japanese does not make the game any less fun.

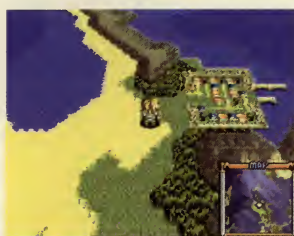
SONGS OF PHANTASIA



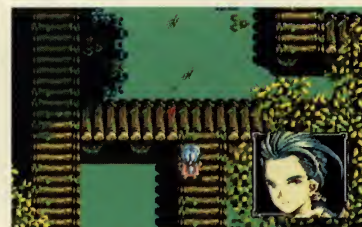
Tales of Phantasia

System: Super Famicom/ Super Nintendo
Developer: Namco
Publisher: Namco
Availability: Now (Japan); unknown (U.S.)

It may seem odd to see Namco (makers of **Tekken 2**) go into the RPG market, but they do a great job with **Tales of Phantasia**. This 48 Meg cart features over 50 hours of game play, and unlike Square's **Chrono Trigger**, you don't have to play it more than once! But like **Chrono Trigger** (which featured character designs by Akira Toriyama of **Dragonball** fame), **ToP** features a popular Japanese manga artist. The character designer is Kyosuke Fujishima, the artist and writer for the series **Oh! My Goddess** and **You're Under Arrest!**.



Several key elements make the cart stand out. One is the spectacular graphics. Everything is nicely detailed and shaded, very impressive for the SNES/SFC platform. It rivals the PSX/Saturn RPGs. Another feature is that **ToP** offers fully digitized voices. That's right—during battle sequences your characters will shout out spells ("First Aid!") and weapon attacks ("Majin Ken!"). In fact, when you start the game, you are greeted with an opening *song*! (Well, the first half of it at least; for the full version you'd have to buy the CD soundtrack.) The song is "Yume



wa owara nai" ("Never-ending Dream") sung by Konami Yoshida.

The battle system is unique. Namco calls it the LMB (Linear Motion Battle) System. The best way to describe it is that it's similar to **Secret of Mana**'s battle system, but in a sideways 2D view. Most of the time you will only control the sword-wielding hero (unless he is killed); otherwise the computer AI controls your companions. You can choose to set your companions to specific attributes, such as "always cast spells", "attack aggressively", or other options that suit your playing style.

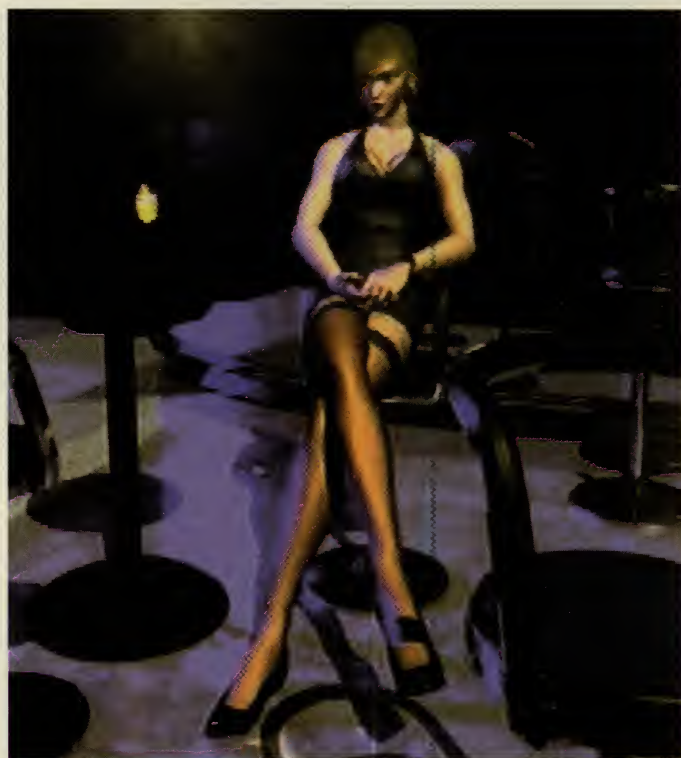
In closing, **Tales of Phantasia** promises to deliver. This is one of the best RPG imports out this year that I have played. The plot keeps you wondering what will happen next. Although they could have lessened the frequent appearances of random encounters (continuous random encounters bore me), it's still pretty addictive.

Phillip L. Yee

The Last Word: **Diehard RPGers will love this game. Let's hope Namco ports this game over to the States so everyone can enjoy the fantastic Tales of Phantasia.**

Three ROM Blondes

Welcome back to the arena, fighting fans! In switching from 2D to the (literally) deeper field of 3D fighting games, we couldn't pass up a chance to pay tribute to their female characters, characters often overlooked (or stared at vacantly) by male gamers. And what better way to pay tribute to them than by having them hack away at one another? Thus we present Nina Williams (*Tekken*), Sarah Bryant (*Virtua Fighter*) and Sofia (*Battle Arena Toshinden*). Let's duck for cover as our commentators argue over who would win, and why all three (characters, not commentators) are either brainwashed, drugged, or amnesiacs!



Professor Jeffrey Nevins

Just as literature, television and cinema have their character types, so too does the medium of video games. Fighting games in particular have spawned characters with well-defined personalities, histories and morals. In this brief study, we'll focus on black leather-wearing, blond-ponytailed, female assassin characters in 3D fighting games.

First comes Sarah (*Virtua Fighter*, leather gloves), a college student who was captured by the faceless corporate entity behind the Virtua Tournament, brainwashed, and sent to kill her brother Jacky Bryant. Nina (*Tekken*, player 2—leather boots) is a British assassin who joined the Tekken tournament to eliminate Heihachi, head of the criminal group running the contest. Finally, Sofia (*Toshinden*, leather bodysuit) is a Russian spy/adventurer with no memory of her past, who is trying to find clues to her origin.

Women with mysterious pasts, raging against the system, with names ending with the "uh" (a, ah) sound (I would've included Cammy as well, but this study is restricted to 3-D fighters)...I believe these three would fight each other in order to determine who is "The Real McCoy." After all, people who are



similar in appearance and personality can often end up resenting each other (possibly because they feel their uniqueness is being threatened).

But how do these fighters compare in battle? Well, Sofia is the best distance fighter with a projectile and a long-reaching whip. Also, only she can roll out of the way—into the third dimension! Let's say Sarah is the best middle-distance fighter (punch/kick range), because Nina is the best in close, with multi-part limb-breakers.

THE WINNER:

My personal favorite is Nina (husky voice, nice outfit as Player 1, and lots of grab moves). However, I'd have to side with Sofia, due to that projectile attack, whip (including that multi-hit special attack) and ability to roll into the third dimension (though I'm sure the others would if they could).





Rev. Roger Miller

Nina, Sara or Sofia? I have to pick Sarah Bryant as the best of the three, but not because I don't like the others. No, I'm sure Takara spent as many hours researching whipping techniques as the AM2 team did on martial arts...ahem.

Sarah wins awards for coming out first. She's a true original; until Max Headroom becomes a polygon fighter; she'll be the oldest popular character of her type. Plus, unlike her colleague Pai, she's actually good.

Sofia is clearly the prima donna of her game. Some gamers have complained about her shoulder size, but it's about time games had some muscular women (not to mention *femme fatales*). Her outfit has also been criticized, but think of other famous women's fighting gear. At least Sofia doesn't have *pom-poms* on her head! On the other hand, Nina is slightly eclipsed by Michelle Chang, the more user-friendly, manga-like character (undoubtedly the resentment has led to her anti-social, knife-toting tendencies).

Why would they fight? Copyright issues? Clothes switched at the laundromat? Ultimately, who *needs* a reason? All it takes is for their sixth sense to say "Aha, I sense another fighting game character!" and they'll go at it, leaving the bystanders in whatever location they're at to wonder "Who *are* these people and why are they causing all this property damage?"

THE WINNER

Sarah Bryant! Yes, her Jeet Kune Do is the most realistic technique. Nina is a clone, down to the purple clothes. Sofia could probably score a few hits early in the combat, but once Sarah closed in, it'd be all over. Lastly, for sheer volume of fan material published, Sarah Bryant is #1.



Doctor Alistair Toth

I must disagree with my honorable colleague. To begin with, Sofia wears *spandex*, not leather! The resultant lack of protection is more than made up by the distraction factor.

How would they meet? Simple. The plot of *Tekken* involves a criminal tournament with

cash rewards for the winner. Sofia being a private investigator, she is just as likely to investigate one evil underground death match as another. Meanwhile, Sarah

Bryant is seeking the money to undo the frontal lobotomy performed on her at the hands of the Syndicate, as well as a better ending scene than the congratulatory text in *Virtua Fighter*. "I was born for cinema sequences," she thinks. Little does she realize that her opponent, Nina Williams, was the very terrorist whose bomb nearly ended her brother Jacky Bryant's race car-driving career! The resultant revenge opportunities would probably end with all three fighting at once.

Of course, I am primarily concerned with the psychological motives of these strapping examples of polygon count, and therefore have placed only a \$5,000 bet on the outcome.

THE WINNER

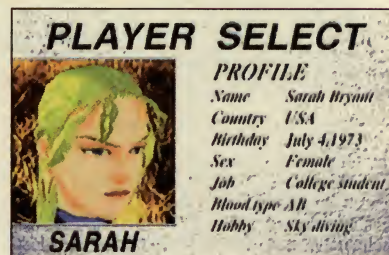
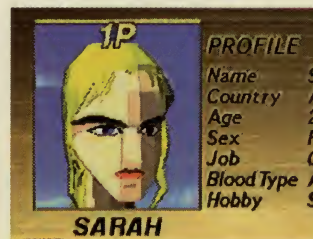
Nina. Having a "Guard" button works to Sarah's advantage, but in defiance of gravity, she still jumps too slowly. That may be fine where she comes from, but next to two fast-moving opponents she is likely to go out in the first round. This leaves Sofia and Nina. However, Sofia is clearly used to fighting male opponents. When Sofia's unspoken dominatrix ploy fails, Nina will rush in and use an aikido neck-snapping technique. Of course, if swords can't even draw blood from her in her native game, Sofia will be okay save for a few bruises, but the fight is still over. I predict that after the battle Nina will politely decline a guest appearance in *King of Fighters '96* and go on to become an enemy in some game more suited to her personality (one with guns).

THE REFEREE

Wow...it looks pretty close! Nina was mentioned a lot, though, and Sofia attracted the written equivalent of lots of fanboy staring. Dr. Toth tells me these papers will be collected for a graduate thesis, *Polygon Count in 18th century Japanese Literature*, clearly a landmark publication for video game scholars. In the meantime, Professor Nevins is encouraged to come back to the *Game On! USA* playtest rooms to retrieve the leather articles he left there. See you next month! 95



SARAH BRYANT



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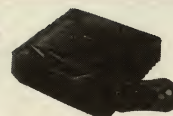
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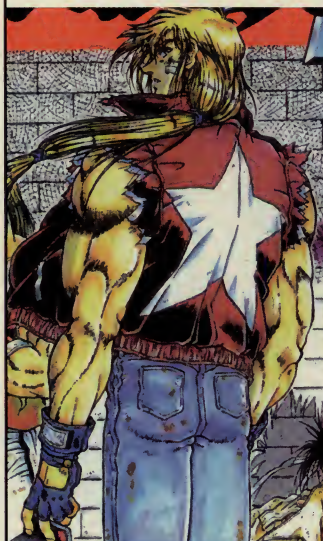
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Feature Presentation

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Is it an art or a skill to design games? *Fatal Fury*, *King of Fighters*, *Samurai Shodown*... You've played them at the arcades, and now Sony, Sega and the new Neo-Geo CD are giving SNK a new audience on home consoles. *Ninja Masters*... *Shin Ou Ken*

...What is the battle plan of the **other** 2D fighting game company in the 32-bit wars? From cartridges to manga and anime, we'll interview the Japanese R&D of SNK's dozens of games, and look at their history and future!



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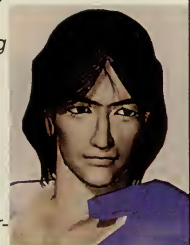
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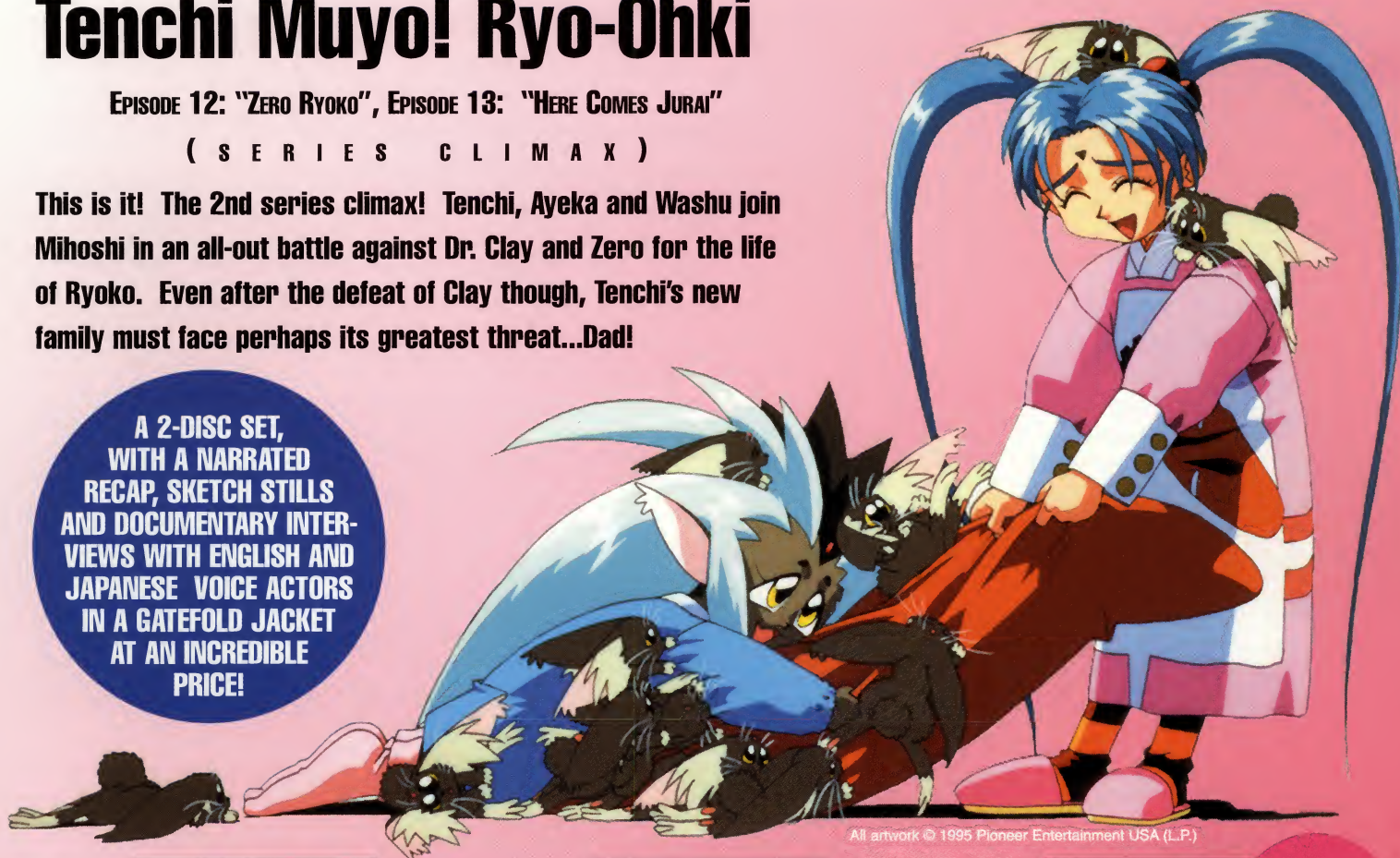
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